French Army Strategy and Strategic Culture during the Algerian War, 1954-1958

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ABSTRACT

French Army Strategy and Strategic Culture
during the Algerian War, 1954-1958
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This thesis examines the various means by which "strategy" was communicated to field commanders during the first half of the French war in Algeria, from 1954 to 1958, and then explores how the actions of a particular regimental commander and his subordinates provides testimony of how they synthesized the concept of "strategy" for them.

Studying wartime strategy solely from the perspective of military and civilian high command leadership is insufficient because it only addresses one of several influences (schools, doctrine, past and current warfighting experiences, and logistical structure, to name a few) that interact together to modify how field commanders actually think about and conduct war.

This thesis proposes that studying an army's strategic culture, understood as the expression of a "way of war," rather than simply an army's "strategy," provides a suitable synthetic approach by which historians and strategists can answer useful and specific questions concerning how and why commanders in the field wage war at their level.

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INTRODUCTION

France's empire was one of the first casualties of WWII.[1] Following the defeat of the French Republic at the hands of Nazi Germany, the Vichy Regime took over administrative responsibilities for France's far-flung colonies. In September 1940, Marshal Philippe Pétain permitted the Japanese to station troops in Indochina in return for retaining administrative control of the country.[2]

France's defeat by Germany and its subsequent virtual abdication to Japan led colonized peoples from the West Indies, North Africa, Madagascar, and farther east to Indochina to share a joint realization: the French were not as invincible as they once seemed. Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh declared Indochina independent on September 2, 1945 by reason that "from the summer of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony, and had become a Japanese possession," and using other language cribbed from American Declaration of Independence.[3] The ensuing war for independence started

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[1] John S. Ambler, *The French Army in Politics, 1945-1962* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 93.

[2] Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy, Indochina at War, 1946-54* (Harrisburg, Pa. Stackpole, 1964), 23.

[3] Robert McMahon, ed., "The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, 1945," in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War* (Lexington, Mass. D.C. Heath, 1995), 36-39.

slowly but continually built steam. Negotiations began and ended indecisively several times. When a bold French gamble in 1954 to interdict Viet Minh supplies by controlling a little-known crossroads called Dien Bien Phu ended in disaster, the French negotiating position crumbled. French forces evacuated the country in disgrace following the July 1954 Geneva Accords.[4]

In contrast to Vietnam, Algeria's location and history tied it more intimately to France. Algeria lies only 500 miles south of the Mediterranean port of Marseilles and had been a part of the French Empire since 1830. Indochina was lost at the expense of approximately 75,000 French Union forces but without causing lasting political damage in France.[5] Algeria, on the other hand, cost fewer French soldiers' lives (nearly 20,000), but would only gain independence after toppling an entire French government in the process.[6]

Mere months after the Geneva accords, on November 1, 1954, operatives of the independence-seeking National Liberation Front (FLN) launched simultaneous attacks against several points in Algeria. Algerians who identified more strongly with Arabic, Berber, or Kabyle culture rather than French culture saw the FLN as a vehicle for self-determination that promised more than the idle talk of previous pro-Algerian groups. France, reeling from defeat in Indochina and in the midst of dealing with nationalist movements in Morocco, Tunisia, and Madagascar, now faced a demand for independence

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[4] Ambler, *The French Army in Politics*, 155.

[5] Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 313.

[6] Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review Books, First Edition , Reprinted 2006), 538.

in a region considered integral to the *patrie* (the French concept of "fatherland"). Following a long and costly war in both blood and treasure on both sides, Algeria gained its independence in March 1962, with the signing of peace accords in Evian, Switzerland, by President Charles de Gaulle and representatives of the FLN.[7]

These few sentences necessarily obscure the complexity of the French army's experiences of these two wars, how they were connected, and how the army adjusted to the challenge of fighting them. The French engaged in what we now refer to as counterinsurgency, a type of war that by its very nature pitted a government-sponsored conventionally-organized force against a rebellious unconventional opponent.[8] Since the adversary could hide among the civilian populace, and was in fact drawn *from* the civil body, numerous legal, tactical, and strategic complexities entered the sphere of military decision-making.

This thesis examines how the French army constructed their strategies, and how they translated their overall strategic conceptions into specific operational orders, and then how those orders were transmitted to and executed by leaders on the ground. While it is convenient to imagine that each war has its own well-defined "strategy," the truth is that "strategy" can exist only perfectly in the mind of the person, or perhaps even staff,

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[7] Counterinsurgencies by nature are difficult wars to follow due to the lack of front lines, the presence of irregular forces, and the preclusion of any traditional "score-keeping." The Algerian War is especially tough because of the many names, populated areas, and natural features unfamiliar to American readers. As such, this chronology will adhere to those events and personalities most salient to this discussion.

[8] I define "counterinsurgency" as the use of state-supported forces, both indigenous and exogenous to the government under attack, to defeat an insurgency and restore internal order. An "insurgency" is an armed political group seeking the overthrow of a civil government through a combination of violent and non-violent means, that may or may not be motivated by ideological, ethic, or religious reasons.

that constructs it (and not often even then). The various acts of trying to communicate strategy, whether through orders, directives, doctrine, military schooling, or military journals, will create different meanings for different people. Often, historical analysis of wartime strategy focuses either on a high command or operations. This project will attempt to link these two levels, and in so doing chart the course of the French strategy as it reached commanders. Since this strategy is by nature diffused through the interaction of many actors, events, and influences, at a certain point removed from the general's desk or the politicians' chambers using the term "strategy" fails to capture the breadth of experience and variety in application. I will refer to the end result – the aggregate of these communicated visions of war as played out in operations – as the French "strategic culture" of the Algerian War. The purpose of this thesis is to help encapsulate a better understanding of how the French "strategic culture" – one could use the phrase "way of war" – developed as a result of multiple inputs, filters through various echelons, and experiences on the ground. The result will be not only a better understanding of how the French army created and disseminated its strategy, but in theoretical terms, I intend to open a dialogue on the difficulty of communicating complex strategy to highlight the diffusion that naturally occurs in modern warfare.[9]

[9] Keegan makes an interesting case for the level of heroic-style leadership required by generals as the locus of command moves farther from the scene of battle, as exhibited by Alexander, Wellington, Grant, and Hitler. Without supporting his final conclusion that the modern ere, the nuclear age, requires abandonment of the heroic model entirely, his identification of this notion of distance from the battlefield led me to consider how much easier it must have been for an Alexander or even a Wellington to impose a particular "way of war" upon his army than it could possibly ever be in the post-industrial era. John Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (New York: Viking, 1987).

Rather than simply taking at face value the idea that there were some simple governing principles or strategies during the war, this paper will demonstrate that a key element in making a strategy work is to communicate it effectively. The greatest plan must be translated into action before it produces any positive outcomes. Usually, strategists and historians focus primarily on the evidence of operational plans and orders passed conceived at the general-officer level to paint a picture of "strategy." While this paper will perform this key analytic task, I will also demonstrate how other factors not directly related to operational orders served to influence the perspectives of and circumscribe the options open to a French officer in command of a battalion or regiment. How did these men, standing at the nexus between received strategy and boots-on-the-ground, perceive the strategy of the war and how did they attempt to translate that into actions that would serve strategic purposes?

Following the historiography and a brief general chronology, this thesis consists of four sections. The first section examines pre-existing ideas about revolutionary war that prevailed in the French Army in 1954 at the start of the Algeria War. Specific studies written in the wake of defeat in Indochina were passed on officially to officers, providing a baseline of ideas within the French army against which later communications about strategy would contend, whether intentionally or not. The next two sections then analyze the multiple programs developed by both civilian and military leaders to communicate strategy in the first two phases of the war, from 1954 to 1955, and 1956 to 1958. This study ends in 1958 because by this point the army had fully internalized practices that were only introduced in the first years of the war. Some of the army's common practices were altered in 1959 and 1960 by new leadership, and the integration of this story into the

groundwork performed in this study would make for an excellent addendum. The final section of this thesis retraces 1956 through 1958 through the experiences of several ground commanders to demonstrate how battalion and regimental commanders put their received orders into practice. This section demonstrates at the ground level how the accrual policies over the first several years increasingly constrained the options available to commanders because higher headquarters placed so many expectations on them that lay outside the standard realm of combat operations.

Methodologically, the first three sections of this paper (Indochina and policy sections, 1954-1956, and 1956-1958) will construct a body of military literature (written orders, directives, and field manuals) directed at field commanders (typically field grade officers: majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels) that best approximates the war's strategy as seen by high command. Certain aspects of this strategy not only guided field commanders' behavior in the conventional sense but also constrained his possible options by creating persistent requirements that demanded the perpetual use of a certain portion of forces. These examples include the employment of local pro-French Algerian militias (Harkis), the deployment of thousands of special officers who worked with villages and tribes, the focus on public works projects, and even the structure of logistics. I categorize these kinds of policies as "structural elements" (essentially, the format of the wartime environment expressed by policies and programs that dictate how forces are garrisoned, by what means they move, how they are supplied logistically, and how they are expected to interact with other players, such as government-supported militias) and I argue that they play a critical role in narrowing the range of options commanders can use in formulating operations and constructing what I have referred to as a "strategic culture,"

or the "way of war." Commanders are always constrained by how they task-organize their forces, how they will be supplied, what kinds of accommodations they will live in, what sorts of transportation they must use, yet it appears that these limitations often operate below the conscious surface and are not consistently treated as crucial framing elements to strategic culture.

I suggest that we consider strategic culture as emerging from the nexus between the expectations of strategy, itself a combination of conscious calculation and precedent embedded in doctrine, schools, journals, and so on, and the limitations of structural elements. In this sense, strategic culture derives both from top-down and bottom-up. Policies and orders directed commanders to take certain actions. Some of these actions (typically conceived of as missions and campaigns) are very specific and limited in space and time. Others, often taking the form of persisting policies and programs, have no well-defined endstate in the sense of goal to be accomplished or a time until expiration. Campaigns and missions will heavily influence *how* a commander deploys his soldiers in the field in terms of tactics, and generally receive the lion's share of attention by military historians because it is here that the actual warfighting occurs. Continuing policies and programs receive far less interest. They simply are not as "sexy." Yet these enduring requirements soak into the daily life of a unit in a far more pervasive manner, sucking up soldiers, time, and energy in little batches as each new policy, program, or reporting requirement is absorbed into the unit's operating cycle. Examples we will explore include the expectation that the army field SAS officers and that units work with them closely; that the army devote soldiers in each unit to train local militias; that the army regroup entire village populations; that army units undertake significant public works projects;

and that army units provide officers to fill the role of civilian administrator. While most field units may not have been affected by every one of these requirements, and accepting that some of these policies were probably very wise, they were also issued to the army like a shotgun round designed to spray pellets into every inch of target space. These policies applied to every field unit, although they affected them differently according to the circumstances of the local environment. As we will see, it is these kinds of area-target policies that while capable of affecting change across the entire country, also inflict a death of a thousand pricks upon the commander's freedom of creativity, maneuver, and will.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Two fields of scholarship inform this work – a historical literature concerned with the Algerian war, and a field focused on the concepts of strategy and strategic culture. As such, this work synthesizes scholarship in French history and military history, and while my conclusions rely on French history, I expect them to carry broader methodological implications for military history and strategic studies.

Scholarship on the Algerian war developed contemporaneously with the conflict itself, spawning a number of early works by the mid-1960s that examined not only the narrative history of the war, its causes, and reasons for French defeat, but also the French army's role in the downfall of the Fourth Republic in 1958.[10] Aside from academics,

[10] Joan Gillespie, *Algeria, Rebellion and Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1960); Jean Domenach, *Algérie: guerre et paix* (Paris: Librarie du mois, 1961); Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (New York: Norton, 1962); David C Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); James Hans Meisel, *The Fall of the Republic: Military Revolt in France*

several notable combatants and administrators published memoirs and sketches of the war.[11] Other prominent period work focused on the influence of theories of revolutionary war on French strategy.[12] Although a few new projects were written in the late 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, these scholars only enjoyed limited access to the war's official military archives.[13] Scholarship toward the end of the twentieth century, led primarily by British and French historians, turned toward a "new military history" approach that began to answer "who" the combatants were, to better describe the experiences of war in Algeria, and to consider issues of memory.[14] Two American scholars considered the war

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(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); Edgar S. Furniss, *De Gaulle and the French Army: a Crisis in Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1964); George Armstrong Kelly, *Lost Soldiers: the French Army and Empire in Crisis, 1947-1962* (Cambridge, Mass. M.I.T. Press, 1965); Ambler, *The French Army in Politics*.

[11] Roger Barberot, *Malaventure en Algérie avec le général Paris de Bollardière* (Paris: Plon, 1957); Jules Roy, *The war in Algeria* (New York: Grove Press, 1961); Jacques Soustelle, *L'Espérance Trahie, 1958-1961* (Paris: Éditions de l'Alma, 1962); Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant en Algérie* (Paris: René Julliard, 1957); Henri Alleg, *La Question* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1958).

[12] Gabriel Bonnet, *Les Guerres Insurrectionnelles et Révolutionnaire* (Paris: Payot, 1958); Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria, the Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (New York: Praeger, 1964); Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare; a French View of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

[13] Orville D Menard, *The Army and the Fifth Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Edgar O'Ballance, *The Algerian Insurrection, 1954-62* (Hamden, Connectiicut: Archon Books, 1967); Charles S Maier and Dan S White, *The Thirteenth of May: the Advent of De Gaulle's Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*; John Talbott, *The War Without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Henri Le Mire, *Histoire Militaire de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982).

[14] Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli: la Mémoire de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991); Martin Evans, *The Memory of Resistance: French Opposition to the Algerian War (1954-1962)* (New York: Berg, 1997); Charles Shrader, *The First Helicopter War: Logistics and Mobility in Algeria, 1954-1962* (Westport, Conn. Praeger, 1999); Jean-Charles Jauffret, *Militaires et Guérilla dans la Guerre d'Algérie* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 2001); Martin S Alexander and John F. V Keiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62: Strategy, Operations*

from the international political level in very successful monographs.[15] Scholarship conducted from the mid-1990s onward has also benefitted from a progressive opening of the French military archival records from the war, heavily restricted for the first 25 years after the war's conclusion. Despite a recent resurgence of academic interest in the war, the Algerian War remains an underappreciated conflict for many American strategists and historians who would probably find in its history many insights if not for the barriers of language and the dominant role of Korea and Vietnam in most Anglophone Cold War studies.

The best-known English-language general histories of the Algerian war are probably Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace* (1972) and Michael Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution* (2002). Surprisingly for a near 40-year old work and its lack of use of the archives now available to scholars, Horne's work is one of the most-recognized histories of the war. Although his narrative is littered with political intrigue, character sketches of leaders on both sides, and meandering tangential narratives, these characteristics, oddly, seem to capture the character of the time he was writing about, even though the history seems disjointed in places. His major shortcoming, and that of any historian writing before the mid-1990s, was a lack of access to archival material.

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and Diplomacy (Portland, Or. Frank Cass, 2002); Martin S Alexander, Martin Evans, and John F. V. Keiger, *The Algerian war and the French Army, 1954-62: Experiences, Images, Testimonies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Guy Dugas, *Par la Plume ou le Fusil: les Intellectuels-Soldats dans la Guerre d'Algérie* (Pézenas: Domens, 2004); Pierre Cyril Pahlavi, *La Guerre Révolutionnaire De l'Armée Française En Algérie, 1954-1961: Entre Esprit De Conquête Et Conquête Des Esprits* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

[15] Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 2006).

Instead he relied on interviews, newspaper accounts, and early contemporary works to inform his narrative. His work and the others by Kelly, Furniss, and Meisel preceding it, give the historian a good sense of what were considered to be the most important issues at the time in shaping the course of the war, and provide a substantial starting point for archival-based re-evaluations.

Rather than simply offering a straightforward narrative, Connelly's *Diplomatic Revolution* suggests that the FLN's ability to internationalize the war in a way that elevated it beyond French domestic politics into the Cold War international arena, which in turn critically undermined the French position more than did the military events on the ground. Connelly's argument does not invalidate research about the war's strategy, however, but rather underlines the importance of better understanding it, especially given the apparent disconnect between military activity and the determinative international political shifts. My research does not attempt to give the military side of the conflict a more important place than it should hold, but rather seeks to understand *why* the military developed the kinds of practices in Algeria that it did.

The relatively recent edited volumes produced by British historians Martin Alexander, Martin Evans, and John Keiger should not be overlooked. This trio published two volumes in 2002, one focused on the French army during the war, and the other focused on operations, strategy, and diplomacy. Prominent French historian Jean-Charles Jauffret edited a 2001 book about soldiers and guerrillas in the war, successfully gathering case studies from prominent scholars. Both made use of recent access to archives, and provide several particularly illuminating case studies that have informed my research. Most of them, however, deal with necessarily confined topics – for example a

particular general's strategy, the experience of a single regiment in the field, the comparison between conscript and regular troops, or the life of Foreign Legionnaire. These types of studies are vital for the advancement of the field of research in the Algerian war, and allow work such as mine to synthesize broader trends and to understand the varied nature of the war far better than any general history can.

Moving from the particular of the Algerian War to the general realm of military history, my thesis interacts with a vein of strategic studies research concerned with what is sometimes called "strategic culture." In its most basic understanding, strategic culture is the way an army wages war, though its use implies both a rootedness in a particular time, place, and conflict while admitting the possibility that some characteristics will transfer within an army between sites of conflict, administrations, and leading practitioners.

One such example of both rootedness in a particular "military culture" but transmission between time and locations plays out in Isabel Hull's *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (2005).[16] Hull's research charts the incremental progress of the German army's strategic culture from a goal of decisive but negotiated victory in 1871 toward a desire for complete annihilation of the enemy in the First World War. In the process she provides a thoroughly helpful discussion of how "military culture" develops. In particular, her work is "the story of how the means overwhelms the ends, indeed became the ends. Its focus is therefore not on

[16] Isabel V Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 2005).

ideology but on *military practices* and the basic assumptions behind them. "These habitual practices, default programs, hidden assumptions, and unreflected cognitive frames I understand in an anthropological and organizational-cultural sense as *military culture*."[17] The special terminology that she employs seeks to break from other scholars who blamed a particular German ideology for creating the Great War German army; she places the mode of causality in the workings of military practice, with the understanding that what an organization actually does shapes its future self just as strongly as the statements it makes about how it would *like to act*: "organizational culture is more likely to determine action than is explicit policy or ideology." (92)

This paper will make use of some of her methodology to explore how the French army's experiences in Indochina, and its practices during the first years of the war in Algeria, contributed to the development of a French "strategic culture" by 1959. Although she uses the phrase "military culture," I prefer "strategic culture" because I think it carries a clearer implication for an ends-means connection than the more vague "military culture" which could apply to many other aspects of a military, both in war and in peace.[18] Strategic culture also implies the effort to capture the army's practices at a higher point in the multi-tier structure of military operations. Rather than being concerned with tactics and how the practice of soldier-tasks and small-unit tasks reflects special insights about the French military, I am concerned with how field-grade officers (majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels) conceived of their purpose as it related to the

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[17] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 2.

[18] Hull specifically chose "military culture" to differentiate it from the peacetime-focused term "military sociology," but I still think military culture too nebulous. Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 93.

war's "strategy." I choose them because they are the leaders of battalions and regiments in the field; leaders who would have personally directed missions and lived closer to the points of action (even if often in headquarters). French battalion and regimental commanders retained a degree of autonomy, which permits a historian to make the claim that they had in theory a wide range of choices available, but they were also supposed to nest their operations to fit into a grander vision – the strategy – for the war. In a counterinsurgency in particular, these men represented the nexus between orders and operations. They were autonomous on many levels, but they were also expected to think about their unit's purpose on a higher level. It is here that I plan to implement an examination of practices to determine what routines these officers adopted during the first years of the war and how this reflected and modified a French "strategic culture."

Other historians – and some political scientists – have taken to the task of explaining strategic culture or "how armies fight" through studies of doctrine, several specifically about the French military in the early 20th century. Barry Posen's *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (1984), which remains well-cited among political science works examining military strategy, uses "organizational theory" and "balance of power theory" to determine why his target states had "deterrent," "defensive," or "offensive" strategies prior to the Second World War.[19] Rather than examining military doctrine, Posen is actually concerned with matters of international security above the army level, and "doctrine" for him is not contained in manuals but refers to a broader approach to war. His military culture could

[19] Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 16.

be considered meta-level. By contrast, Elizabeth Kier in *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the wars* (1997) enters in the well-mined field of interwar doctrinal research by contesting the role of realist and power politics approaches. She argues that the French and British failed to exercise enough imagination in framing the kind of wars they would fight next and that their specific military cultures inhibited the adoption of more offensive strategies. She defines military culture as the "set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and formal knowledge that shape [its] collective understandings."[20] This seems like a robust definition of military culture, and while Kier supports her argument convincingly, she bases it on the importance of values and norms, which is opposite to Hull's habits-based approach. Another important difference is that both Hull and I seek to examine the culture of armies actively engaged in war, while Posen, Kier, and Robert Doughty (*Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939)* all examine armies *between* wars. Doughty explained that the French officer corps "implicitly accepted doctrine as a substitute for thinking and an alternative to creative, imaginative actions. And few soldiers questioned the verities uttered in lecture halls or published in field manuals or official journals."[21] The focus in his research, like the other two works, focuses on the relationship between doctrine, thoughts about war, and culture. Although his research explores trials of new tank technology and French attempts to try out doctrine in training simulations, he and the others necessarily grant an importance to ideology and doctrine that I argue informs

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[20] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1997), 28.

[21] Robert A Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: the Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939* (Hamden, Conn. Archon Books, 1985), 12.

strategic culture early in war but is trumped by military experience over time. Or, in other words, strategic culture necessarily evolves, but wartime conditions greatly hasten the process of evolution.

THE WAR IN ALGERIA - AN OVERVIEW

Figure 1: Algeria in the Mediterranean

This work encompasses the full, if often twisted chronology of the war, from 1954 through to 1962, although France did not commit broadly to the war until the fall of 1955 and began to pull out in early 1961. In essence the years between 1954 and 1962 witnessed three general phases. The three major phases are (1) 1954 through 1955, (2) 1956 through 1958, and (3) 1959 to 1962.[22] This thesis is concerned with the creation of a French strategic culture during the first two phases.

First, from 1954 to 1955, the FLN increased its numbers and its control over the country while consolidating power over the other nationalist groups. Following the initial

[22] A note on sources: all of the archival material abbreviated **SHAT** comes from the French Army Archives, or ***S**ervice **H**istorique de l'**A**rmée de **T**erre*, located at Vincennes, Paris. SHAT groups cartons from Indochina as "10H" and those from Algeria as "1H."

terrorist attacks of November 1, 1954, most locals waited expectantly for the French forces to decisively destroy the uprising. Six months later, the rebels continued to build strength, generally unopposed.[23] The French government tried to defuse the situation with locally based army and police, although neither the commanding general of French forces in Algeria nor the civilian resident minister led the development of any coherent unified strategy. By the end of 1955, rebels had built a strong presence in the Kabylie region east of Algiers along the coast and had boosted their numbers nationally to about 25,000.[24] With regard to strategic culture, some of the first programs that would serve as structural elements shaping military decision-making came into effect, notably the creation of the Special Administrative Sections (SAS), the establishment of auto-defense units generally known as *harki*, and a widespread army commitment to assisting with public works programs.

During the second phase, from 1956 to early 1958, the French Army began to regain the initiative, most notably with the late 1957 military victory in the "Battle of Algiers" and by the completion of the Morice Line along the Tunisian border. In December 1956, General Raoul Salan replaced General Henri Lorillot and began to develop a more robust approach to fighting the war. By the end of 1957, he determined that the rebel presence in the capital, Algiers, needed to be eliminated regardless of the political cost. The Battle of Algiers effectively neutralized the FLN operatives in the capital, although its success hinged on the use of torture, extra-judicial arrests, and a disregard for French civil protections. The Morice Line, a border-spanning barbed-wire

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[23] Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 140-143.

[24] Alexander and Keiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62*, xi.

fence along the Algerian-Tunisian border and patrolled by guards located at regularly spaced reinforced outposts, dramatically interdicted the movement of personnel, supplies, and intelligence between the "exterior" FLN headquarter in Tunisia and the "interior" forces fighting in Algeria.[25]

The addition of French conscripts (all reservists), beginning with the August 1955 call-up of over 50,000 reservists, provided needed manpower at the expense of quality.[26] This alteration to the composition of the military would serve as another structural element affecting the scope of operational flexibility available to commanders. By mid-1956, the army's presence swelled to nearly 500,000 by mid-1956.[27] This number would remain essentially constant through 1961. Compared with the eight million mostly native Algerians, the one million European-descended Algerians, and the roughly ten thousand FLN fighters, France's troop commitment appears enormous. Although the soldiers received basic training prior to deployment, the army faced an enormous challenge in efforts to convey the complexities of counter-guerrilla warfare to the poorly motivated, under-funded, often-maligned reserve conscripts.[28]

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[25] Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 230.

[26] Pierre Montagnon, *Histoire de l'Armée Française: des Milices Royales à l'Armée de Métier* (Paris: Pygmalion, 1997), 295.

[27] Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 156-161.

[28] Historian Charles Jauffret explains that the 1954-1959 French army in Algeria exhibited "an absence of interarmy culture": the conscript and regular forces nearly constituted separate armies. Jauffret, *Militaires et Guérilla dans la Guerre d'Algérie*, 26. While most of the reservists did not objective to the principle of national service at the time, the French government's poor ability to explain the war's purpose beyond maintaining "Algeria as France" and the constant shift of national leadership contributed to a general malaise among the draftees.

Several changes in the political atmosphere in Algeria during this period are worth noting. Paris sent Robert Lacoste to replace Jacques Soustelle as resident minister in March 1956. On one side, European-descended Algerians (*pied-noirs*) demanded a more active government response to the increased rebel strength of 1956 and 1957. On the other side, native Algerians demanded long overdue institutional reforms, such as better access to government and inclusion within the national government. Lacoste, caught between these conflicting interests, both tried to improve the working relationship between military leaders and civilian administrators while also providing civil reforms to the Algerian people.[29] For the more moderate Algerian leaders in particular, expanded access to government and cooperation with government came too little, too late to prevent the allure of the FLN's more extreme measures from building broad local public support.

The war's third phase lasted from May 1958 through the eventual termination of hostilities. *Pied-noirs* rioting in Algiers against weak government prosecution of the war, with support from the military, led to the collapse of the government in Paris on May 13, 1958. Charles de Gaulle returned to power in a combination of arrogant self-initiative, political maneuvering, and good timing first as Prime Minister and then as President. He created the new Fifth Republic under a constitution granting the president a more proactive role with far more control over policy. He leveraged the conditions under which he came to power – representing many values to many different groups – by initially offering fairly vague policy outlooks. Although many military leaders expected de Gaulle

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[29] Robert Lacoste, *Minister Residant's thoughts on Current Situation*, July 10, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT.

to support French Algeria in return for the military's early support in May, he was careful to keep his plans secret. He instead offered rhetoric that could either sound like support for an independent Algeria or maintenance of the status quo, depending on the listener's predilections. In fact, focused on restoring French autonomy and power within Europe, de Gaulle started a gradual policy shift towards Algerian independence.[30]

At the beginning of 1959 de Gaulle appointed air force general Maurice Challe to the command of forces in Algeria. Through a re-organization of forces – what I would describe as a reframing of structural elements, and better use of native *harki* units, Challe's command steadily whittled down FLN units across the country while maintaining control of the villages and settlements along the way. While his strategy, known as the Challe Plan, succeeded militarily, it also expanded the *regroupement* policy that forcibly relocated nearly a million Algerians into squalid army-guarded shantytowns.

The last two years of the war witnessed less open confrontation both due to the success of the Challe Plan, de Gaulle's now open support of an independent Algeria, and the FLN leadership's desire to conserve fighting power in order to seize control of government in the period of fresh independence that appeared increasingly inevitable. In September 1959, de Gaulle publicly declared the Algerians' right to self-determination. This news, not well received by the *pied-noirs*, led to the attempt by conservative-led factions to replicate the 1870 Paris Commune in the streets of Algiers. After a week of stressful drama in Algiers, de Gaulle finally weighed in by directly addressing the nation. His characteristic élan so demoralized the protesters that they returned home within

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[30] John Gaffney, *Political Leadership in France: from Charles de Gaulle to Nicholas Sarkozy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15-36.

days.[31] In the intervening period between his return to power and the fall of 1959, his continually ambiguous attitude toward Algeria's future status had created political space for the rise of the *Front d'Algérie Française*, which bitterly opposed independence, even after his pronouncement. Nevertheless, a violent country-wide demonstration by Muslims in support of *Algérie Algerienne* during de Gaulle's December 1960 country visit left no doubt in anyone's minds that independence was now only a matter of time.[32] De Gaulle is said to have remarked years later about early 1961: "the war was all but over. Military success was achieved. Operations had been reduced to next to nothing. Instead politics dominated the scene."[33] Counterinsurgency operations after this point became an economy of force mission, buying time until the conclusion of negotiations at Evian in spring 1962.

Even this basic outline of events should convey a sense of the complexity and shifting nature of French strategy in Algeria. Before returning to Algeria, however, we will explore French army thoughts about revolutionary war at the end of the war in Indochina, since some 40% of the army in Algeria had first defended the French Union in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Their experiences were hard-won and not necessarily easily forgotten when they were reassigned to confront nationalists in Algeria.

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[31] Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 344-346.

[32] Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 432-435.

[33] Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 425.

FRENCH STRATEGIC THINKING AT THE END OF INDOCHINA

> "Moreover, the skilled leaders, both the officers and the NCOs, are composed in large part, we mustn't forget, by men who arrived in North Africa coming from Indochina, and who have been in the breach for many years." – Senator de Maupeou, January 1957[34]

By the end of the war in Indochina in 1954, many French officers had begun engaging concepts of revolutionary war in earnest. Although the analysis here focuses on the Algerian War, French officers' experiences in the jungles of Southeast Asia clearly influenced their understanding of how to deal with the new *guerre révolutionnaire* they faced in late 1954. The French officers developed attitudes about pacification operations and the complexities of war waged in the midst of a civilian environment during their war in Indochina. As we will see, French officers authored various reports, lectures, and even field manuals that institutionalized these views just as the army was getting started fighting insurgents in Algeria. These views then became the baseline against which the army would compare its experiences in North Africa.

ÉLY AND NEMO: SUMMARIES OF INDOCHINA

Two army-sponsored studies emerged after Dien Bien Phu, Colonel Jean Nemo's "The Ground War in Tonkin, from 1946 to 1954," completed in January 1955, and Commanding General Paul Ély's "Lessons from the War in Indochina," completed at the end of May 1955. Both contained insights from the war that reflected a seemingly

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[34] Senateur de Maupeou, *Rapport d'Enquête* (Conseil de la République, 1957), 6, 1H 1943, SHAT.

objective self-criticism of operational successes and failures and provided some categories by which to evaluate the nascent conflict in Algeria.

Nemo's report, which he admits received poor self-editing and suffered from hasty compilation, nonetheless comprehensively covered the war from start to end, and focused on extracting "lessons learned." In one section of his study, he summarized all the major command directives from the war. Several rang tones that would sound familiar later in the Aurés or Nemetcha mountains of Algeria, such as the benefits of working with local forces to achieve political effects. A 1949 command directive on "pacification" instructed troops to "associate to the greatest extent with Vietnamese troops" to "give the population the feeling that they have been liberated by their compatriots."[35] Most of the 77 summarized directives however, dealt with tactics for destroying Viet Minh forces, controlling mobility corridors, or gathering intelligence, rather than focusing on methods for pacification. Nemo did mention in another section of the report that cannon fire and aerial bombardment could lead the local population to lose confidence in French forces and believe that the French only fought in "a spirit of racial domination."[36] Yet his overriding focus on destruction of the armed sections of the insurgent forces rather than dismantling the enemy "administrative-political structure" (as it was known later in Algeria and not mentioned as such in this report) seems to reflect accurately the general approach many French officers would adopt when first confronting the FLN in Algeria: destroy the armed rebels to defeat the insurgency. Other sections of Nemo's several

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[35] Jean Nemo, *Annexe III - Analyse de principales directives*, La Guerre en Surface au Tonkin de 1946 à 1954 (Quang Yen, 1955), 18, 10H 2509, SHAT.

[36] Jean Nemo, *La Guerre en Surface au Tonkin de 1946 à 1954, II - Les Evolutions de la guerre en surface*, La Guerre en Surface au Tonkin de 1946 à 1954, 1955, 8, 10H 2509, SHAT.

hundred-page report examined the performance of each of the combat and support arms (such as infantry, armor, artillery, signal and logistics). In his short section on pacification operations, he concluded that they were poorly planned, insufficiently defined, often hastily led, and "very rarely succeeded."[37]

To improve upon efforts in Indochina, he recommended that future pacification efforts follow a three-phase approach. He valued the first phase, planning, above the others, judging that sufficient propaganda and preparation of the people to receive a new civil administration was paramount before rushing into the execution phase that followed. Notably, despite the report's overall focus on defeating the rebels militarily, he advocated using the minimum force necessary to destroy or "repress" the enemy bands. He also recommended selecting an administrative team that would stay behind to turn the village into the next "market and school." This would occur during the final phase, consolidation.[38] Despite his mentions of pacification, however, the bulk of Nemo's analysis of "guerre en surface," or ground war, really concentrated on the failures in operations – to maintain open lines of communication, to destroy the enemy armed force, and almost as an afterthought at times, to integrate an effective new civil administration.

Several months later, General Paul Ély, the final commander of French Forces in South Vietnam and later Army Chief of Staff from 1956 to 1959, published his staff's findings. Using over 1400 reports from officers of all ranks along with training circulars and command directives, his report intended to be a more synthetic and institutional

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[37] Jean Nemo, *Enseignements: A - L'Infanterie*, La Guerre en Surface au Tonkin de 1946 à 1954 (Quang Yen, 1955), 36, 10H 2509, SHAT.

[38] Nemo, *Enseignements: A - L'Infanterie*, 36.

product than Colonel Nemo's. The report was a three-volume publication: the first volume dealt with matters of statecraft and national policy, the second volume with summaries of major lessons from fighting, and the third recommended what French forces should do in the next war of this nature.[39]

Several key observations about the nature of revolutionary war emerged from this study. For example, the author identified a "pre-insurgency" period and suggested "authorities charged to maintain order must intervene more in political, economic, and social affairs than in police matters" and that "while the rebel leaders have to be prudent and careful [before the conflict escalates to full-blown war], we must not use savage repression." And while the effective collection of these various forms of information would require the "assistance" of civil servants, this gesture to positive civil-military cooperation was not an endorsement of either an equal partnership and certainly not subordination of military command to civilian. Once rebellious activity had tipped over to the point that force was necessary, Ély warned that military operations should be short and decisive, using the least amount of troops necessary, and that clearing operations should be avoided if possible because the population viewed them as harassment rather than as a means to root out destabilizing elements. [40]

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[39] The second volume is the only one that I have found. Although it is not the volume with specific lessons for French forces, it does contain over 300 pages of observations about the various successful and unsuccessful aspects of the war, certainly more than enough to give a reader the sense of where volume three was leading. Paul Ély, *A Translation from the French Lessons of the War in Indochina*, trans. V.J. Croizat, May 1967, iii-iv. RAND translated Volume II alone in 1967, intending its content for US forces in Vietnam, though there is not much evidence to indicate the translation reached a wide audience. Though I reference this study, the translations found are my own directly from the French.

[40] Paul Ély, *Engeignements de la Guerre d'Indochine* (Saigon, May 31, 1955), 11-12, 1H 2522, SHAT.

During combat operations, Ély's staff stressed the difficulty of fighting against an ideologically-focused enemy with no ideology of one's own, the poor results made to shift Vietnamese loyalties, and the often counter-productive effect of direct action: "In regions obedient to the Viet Minh, where we sometimes made incursions, we nearly always paid for a little military advantage by substantially antagonizing the population."[41] This single sentence not only typified the nature of a vast body of problems in North Africa, but pointed to the importance of a fine sense of discretion and judgment at all levels of command.

Ély and Nemo differed somewhat with regard to how they viewed the types of operations needed. Ély described three types of ground operations: those that maintained "axes of control," those that sought "area control," and finally, pacification. These three forms of action most concerned the sector-controlling static forces (the "*implantées*," which conveys the sense of being rooted to the ground). The mobile groups, smaller in absolute number but concentrated into larger maneuver units, were to be used primarily for large-scale clearing and destruction of major enemy formations. Static forces could undertake those operations on a limited scale, if needed.[42] The implication was that fixed forces kept operations on an even keel while the mobile groups truly made the gains – destruction of the enemy – that would win the war.

Nemo considered both the static forces and the mobile groups together, rather than differentiating between them as sharply as Ély did. Nemo structured the variety as

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[41] Ély, *Engeignements de la Guerre d'Indochine*, 17. "Désaffection" could also be "alienation" or "estrangement."

[42] Ély, *Engeignements de la Guerre d'Indochine*, 26.

defensive operations (to protect sensitive points, routes, and convoys), sector operations ("radiating operations," pacification), intelligence-gathering operations, and destructive operations. "Radiating" operations (*rayonnement*) were to be entrusted to infantry officers who had a large share of "human, not just technical, skill" so that they could interact with the population on a permanent and local basis, and favor political to military solutions. They were expected to employ a variety of techniques at their level that included psychological warfare.[43]

While conventional operational requirements (size and type of unit) might be determined by calculating factors about the opposing force, Nemo theorized that the complexities of "guerre en surface" required a different "barometer" for success, in particular gauging force size against surface area and inhabitants. He theorized (using a few supporting examples) that a minimum of 5 uniformed regular soldiers per square kilometer and 1 soldier per 100 inhabitants were needed for effective pacification.[44] These force ratios could not guarantee success, certainly, but they seemed to him to be a greater indicator of likely successful pacification. This metric is a noticeable difference from Élys's apparent focus on the mobile groups. Both officers' reports seemed to weight the value of destroying enemy forces as equal to or more important than "pacifying" through political means, but Nemo's insistence on a ratio of static troops to inhabitants and area gave more value to those types of forces. Regardless, both reports favored the

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[43] Nemo, *Enseignements: A - L'Infanterie*, 16-18. *Rayonnement* conveys the imagery of the sun's rays radiating away, just as the success of pacification would spread out from the French camp.

[44] Nemo, *Enseignements: A - L'Infanterie*, 19-21. At the height of French troop levels in Algeria, around 440,000 in 1956, the ratio of soldiers to civilians would have been closer to 1:50. According to Nemo's calculation, the French should have succeeded with half that many troops.

mobile groups, and this disparity in perceived value reflected the split that occurred first in Indochina, and then carried over to Algeria, between the forces that carried out mobile operations and those that provided static defense. Airborne and Foreign Legion units typically performed the more exciting mobile mission, while conscripted reservists increasingly performed the duller static mission.[45]

A composite picture of revolutionary war from Nemo and Élу would emphasize the necessity of employing both static forces and mobile groups in proportion, even if they differed over which force was more decisive. Both reports also cautioned against unilateral military operations although neither explicitly encouraged a full partnership with civilian officials in any specific manner either. Nonetheless, military force alone was not sufficient, and both authors agreed that much care needed be taken regarding the right timing and manner of direct action when local populations would incur derivative harm. Finally, psychological war, still methodologically inchoate, carried powerful potential, though no consensus emerged regarding whether specialists in the techniques or specialists in the local regions were best suited to direct psychological operations.

The effects that any reports, manuals, or memoranda have on an organization can be difficult to assess. The added security classification of these two studies complicates that process. Despite this, however, these reports, particularly Élу's robust sampling of 1400 officer reports, give us an idea of what many officers may have thought about revolutionary war as the French army's chapter in Indochina came to a close.

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[45] Montagnon, *Histoire de l'Armée Française: des Milices Royales à l'Armée de Métier*, 297.

LACHEROY: A LESSON IN REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

While Nemo and Élyʼs reports may have been contained perspectives considered best-reserved for the highest staff levels, one report appears to have gained currency in military circles: Colonel Charles Lacheroyʼs "Viet-Minh and Communist Action in Indochina," subtitled, perhaps somewhat optimistically, "A Lesson in Revolutionary War". Lacheroy, a veteran of Indochina and later major figure in French psychological warfare, particularly during the Battle of Algiers, delivered his paper as a lecture to the Advanced Studies Institute for National Defense and to the officers of the French Armed Forces General Staff in April and May 1955, around the same time as Élyʼs report was finalized. Lacheroy brought a radically different message concerning why Indochina failed and how the campaign in Algeria would not. He centered his focus on the future of psychological warfare, and appeared to take every opportunity to win adherents to his camp.[46]

Lacheroy analyzed four common reasons given for the French loss in Indochina: "lukewarm public opinion at home, uncertainty and loss of vigor and unity of governmental directives, lack of unity of action between France and the United States, and instability of the High Command." For him, none of these common perceptions about the war could contend with the power of the "New Weapon," a strategic invention of the

[46] Algeria war veteran David Galula mentioned two camps of officer, the "warriors" who favored large-scale destructive missions and the "psychologists," Lacheroy being the best example, who while few in number, "were very articulate. They managed to take hold of the professional French Army magazines in which, month after month, they published their thoughts and gave the impression that theirs was indeed the official doctrine." David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 65.

Viet Minh that synthesized two new tools. Working together, three "parallel hierarchies" and psychological war could literally own the country's people, body and soul.[47]

Parallel hierarchies restructured social and political life in Vietnam. The Viet Minh movement grouped everyone into two different frameworks that required mandatory participation. The Social Hierarchy split men and women, and then divided them by age groups (young men, young women, middle-aged men, old women, etc). Communist party leaders charged with identifying and "denouncing the slightest defiance" convened these groups regularly for "self-criticism" sessions to conduct political education.[48] Together with the Territorial Hierarchy, which treated the village as the basic social unit, the two hierarchies destroyed family bonds. The family was not a recognized social group under the Communist system; first allegiances were owed to the Social Hierarchy's age- and sex-differentiated groups, rather than to family members. Mobilizing people for fighting or supporting roles became far easier because specific groups could be summoned and sent off on a variety of missions fitting their age, sex, and abilities. The third hierarchy, selectively built around a three to four man Communist party cell, executed policy at successive levels, and included at most a tenth of the population.[49]

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[47] Charles Lacheroy, *Action Viet-Minh et Communiste en Indochine*, April 25, 1955, 1, 10H 397, SHAT.

[48] "Self-criticism" was a process of political purification whose culminating act required members to write out all their sins against the Party and then allow the leader to read their confession out to the assembled group. Lacheroy described one such meeting in which a young initiate finally denounced his father "in order to be perfectly purified". Lacheroy, *Action Viet-Minh et Communiste en Indochine*, 13.

[49] Lacheroy, *Action Viet-Minh et Communiste en Indochine*, 9-12.

While the three-fold hierarchy controlled people's bodies, Lacheroy deduced that the Communist use of psychological war or "moral techniques" could "take possession of souls." The National Resistance Committee, which Lacheroy referred to as the "military brain" controlled and unified the propaganda used upon the people. The theory was analogous to "when one solidly holds the vessel he may fill it with what he wishes." Since the hierarchical structure kept people ordered through mandated meetings and self-criticism sessions, the political officers could structure those events to suit their needs.[50]

Having seen these parallel hierarchies reap tremendous benefit for the Viet Minh, Lacheroy emphatically concluded that democracies must use this "New Weapon," psychological war, combined with parallel hierarchies unless they desired to lose the next revolutionary war as well. Ironically, the closest French parallel that Lacheroy observed was a French naval officer, appointed as Chief of Indochinese Youth Movements from 1941 to 1945, who used the Vichy regime's youth movement structure to mobilize Vietnamese young men. Lacheroy acknowledged that "universal morals and the human conscience" caused "grave problems" with implementing such drastic social re-engineering for political purposes.[51]

Colonel Lacheroy's "lessons" from the war spoke of a very different conflict from the much more conventional recommendations of Nemo and Élÿ. Communist ideology pervaded his work, and while his more intimate understanding of that organization certainly enhanced his knowledge, his insistence on mirroring the enemy's strategy

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[50] Although controlling the body in order to control the soul may sound superficially post-structuralist, I am not aware of any connection to post-structuralist thought. Lacheroy, *Action Viet-Minh et Communiste en Indochine*, 19-20.

[51] Lacheroy, *Action Viet-Minh et Communiste en Indochine*, 36.

probably blinded him to its faults as well. Lacheroy's report may have been uniquely influential. Despite much critical reflection about the war, only limited evidence speaks to how widely the French command may have disseminated the "official" post-conflict reports. Though little is known about the legacy of Élys's and Nemo's reports, Lacheroy's paper remained in the canon of the French army's Center for Instruction in Pacification and Counter-Guerrilla War until at least as late as May 1959.[52]

Two other reports are known to have reached wide distribution within the army: one that covered combat in the last 70 days of battle following the May 7, 1954, defeat at Dien Bien Phu, and another that examined aerial support to ground forces in the last two years of the war. The first report, of most interest here, concluded that although Dien Bien Phu was not a negligible defeat, "the cease fire was not imposed by a military situation sufficiently degraded to impose an immediate suspension of arms." The report credited the enemy's guerrilla actions with undeniable successes, but associated the victory more directly with the Communist ability to mobilize people toward the clear goal of liberating the country and "absolute faith in final success."[53] The French army in Algeria would experience an eerily similar situation in 1962, as the French army's intelligence reported the rebel army to have been at one of its weakest points, but the political situation, which supported negotiating a peace with the FLN, ultimately prevailed.

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[52] Centre d'Instruction Pacification et Contre-guerilla, *CIPCG Training Documents* (Arzew: Centre d'Instruction Pacification et Contre-Guerilla, May 1959), 1H 1115, SHAT.

[53] *Sommaire: Deux études des FTNV*, 1954, 10H 2509, SHAT.

FIELD MANUALS OF THE WAR IN INDOCHINA

In addition to these reports, the Indochina war left the army with several field manuals that discussed the means of waging counter-guerrilla war and pacification in various ways. The first was "A Note on Combat in the Jungle and in Guerrilla War" (1954), a doctrinal manual published in Algeria at the Cherchell military college, for graduating officers bound for Indochina.[54] The 10th Military Region Command, the organization charged with security in Algeria before and during the Algerian War, authored the forty-page tactical primer, although it is not apparent what use the command made of this manual after Indochina wrapped up. Interestingly, this manual explained how to fight in the jungle *as guerrillas* in order to destroy guerrilla forces, and it covered a number of tactical concerns such as team composition, mission, orders, patrolling, ambushes, reflexive firing, hand-to-hand fighting, signals, tracking, etc. Small-unit junior officers would be expected to put it to good use.[55]

The very first few pages discussed the nature of guerrilla war and indicated attitudes toward that kind of war held not simply by units in Indochina, but also actually espoused by the early 1950s staff in Algeria. Nowhere does this document mention communism, although it does express the importance of co-opting the support of the local inhabitants to the extent that they can join an intelligence network or even become locally

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[54] The manual is undated but references requirements for fighting in Indochina and the different terrain one might encounter. The manual is located in an Algerian War carton at the archives titled "Subversive War and Psychological Action" under the general grouping of cartons reserved for the Operations Section of the 10th Military Region. 3rd Bureau, Chef-Etat Major, *Notice sur le combat de la jungle et de la guerilla*, Règlement, 1954, 2-5, 1H 1942, SHAT.

[55] Anyone familiar with the patrolling techniques taught at the US Army Ranger School would recognize much of the tactical advice doled out here. French officers did liaise at US Army training centers during this period, and future research might investigate whether American forces in Vietnam developed their patrolling techniques from such intellectual exchanges.

recruited guerrillas. Destruction of sensitive sites and the destruction and harassment of enemy forces were the clearly stated "general missions" while raising a partisan force and earnestly seeking local cooperation seemed to fit more distinctly into missions only necessary if the French guerrillas were undertaking insurrection. In Indochina, then, it seems the army forces would be expected to focus on destroying the enemy guerrilla bands rather than targeting enemy support in the population or dismantling the political-administrative structure.

The other manual, *Le Poste*, a thick volume that focused on establishing an independent but highly defensible "post," was clearly intended for junior officers and senior sergeants.[56] The manual employed two stereotypes: a foolish chief of post and a smart chief of post. Often employing cartoons to show the pitfalls into which the former would stumble through laziness, or the obstacles the latter would avoid through planning and hard work, *Le Poste* was intentionally accessible to someone of middling literacy. Despite its tactical focus, however, several pages worth of pacification notes instructed the more persevering junior leader in some finer points of winning over recalcitrant peoples.

Aside from admonitions to avoid alienating local leaders by smirking at local customs, failing to recognize the village hierarchy, or not delivering on promises of supplies or protection, *Le Poste* emphasized the importance of partnering with local leadership more pointedly: "All pillaging, all acts of violence or useless brutality, all humiliating and arbitrary decisions, all spectacles of drunkenness, all fights, are as direct attacks to the prestige of France and expand skepticism, distrust, or hate of those whom

[56] Capitaine Reveillou, *Le Poste* (Saigon, 1953).

we intend to attract to us and guide toward a better future." Furthermore, "the Vietnam that we desire will not happen without the assistance of the Vietnamese themselves, and our action will have no lasting effect unless it is welcomed by the consent of the population."[57]

Such strong wording must have touched at least a few hardened veterans in the summer of 1953, when *Le Poste* was first distributed. Yet the manual's three-step approach to achieve the "conquest of hearts" (step 3) followed a path that Nemo and Élywould have approved. Step 1 was "conquest of the land," achieved by the "destruction and dismantling of enemy forces." Next, an "untiring propaganda campaign among the peoples under rebel control" would achieve step 2, "conquest of spirits." The final, elusive, "conquest of hearts" required "demonstrating to the rallied populations that they have chosen the good cause and that they must take part in the battle."[58] *Le Poste* did not provide the requisite instruction on propaganda or much insight on how to form indigenously-recruited forces to combat the Viet Minh. By its combination of strong rhetoric and rather weak specific recommendations, this manual fit into the same mold as other French official documents of the era.

Le Poste's primary purpose was not to inform junior leaders on the intricacies of pacification, and its authors could perhaps be forgiven for not elucidating further, they would have been well-served by pointing their readers to the one manual, published twice

[57] Reveillou, *Le Poste*, 204.

[58] Reveillou, *Le Poste*, 199.

during the Indochina war, that did discuss these matters in some detail, *Instructions pour le Combat et La Pacification en Indochine du Sud*.[59]

First published in 1948 and then reprinted in 1952, *Instructions pour le Combat et La Pacification en Indochine du Sud* (*Instructions for Combat and Pacification in Southern Indochina*), was the creation of the commanding general for French Forces in Southern Indochina (as opposed to the forces in Tonkin, or Northern Indochina). In line with the title's ordering, much of the manual described the best methods for combat, while pacification operates in the background, informing everything, yet remaining beyond exact description. "Our goal is pacification of the country. This must never be lost from view. All available means to hasten pacification can be put to good use: means of repression, certainly, but also and more often means of attraction." In this manner, the manual stressed the soft side of the equation: "The [population] must be treated with kindness, even if we are sometimes duped." To this end, *Instruction* stressed that "we will succeed in our task if we truly know and love this country and this people," an admittedly lengthy process that would require not only spending time learning and respecting local customs and morals, but actually learning the language and culture.[60]

The importance of not only military measures "to fight anarchy" but to "not increase it by illegal means" was highlighted in the discussion of "constructive" missions. The authors suggested the importance of building better communities with Vietnamese cooperation along both moral and material lines. Leaders should not only gradually

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[59] Général Bondis, *Instructions pour le Combat et La Pacification en Indochine du Sud* (Saigon, 1952).

[60] Bondis, *Instructions*, 13-15.

promote commerce and the free movement of peoples between areas, but should eliminate martial laws once they became unnecessary.[61]

All told, this pamphlet came closer to specifying expected behavior for units conducting pacification operations than the others. By explaining that France was not at war with Vietnam but rather the Vietnamese were fighting one another for control of the country, soldiers who did not fully understand the politics of the region learned that the enemy, the Viet Minh, was not a country but a revolutionary group. Penning a line that *Le Poste* may have lifted nearly verbatim later, the author contended that the war "could not be fought effectively except with the approval of the Vietnamese themselves." The implication may have been that said popular support could run either way, of course.[62]

Instructions described a specific process for pacification that lacked the catchy "conquest of the land… of spirits… of hearts" that *Le Poste* would recommend later, but its process did fit within Ély and Nemo's later recommendations. *Instructions* favored "the destruction and dismantling of enemy forces" before pacification. The commander would determine which area to focus his efforts upon, and then move his forces in under the strictest discipline, not tolerating any abuse of the people or their belongings. Moreover, the soldiers should immediately begin building rapport with the people and should start an information campaign explaining that the army comes "to free them from the terror of the Viet Minh." This is the primary slogan, devoid of anti-Communist pro-

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[61] Bondis, *Instructions*, 14.

[62] Bondis, *Instructions*, 13. "Il ne peut être combattu efficacement qu'avec le concours des VietnamIens eux-mêmes." Compare to *Le Poste* (199): "Il ne peut être combattu et vaincu qu'avec le concours des Viêtnamiens eux-mêmes."

democracy rhetoric, that all members of the army from lowest to highest were expected to ingrain into the population.[63]

Once security was established then the commander could begin to rebuild the village council, to eliminate any Viet Minh who remained there, and to begin recruiting locals for "auto-defense" forces. Described as a very difficult mission, the manual did not provide too many specific recommendations for how to recruit locally, how to vet possible recruits, or whether they should be paid, uniformed, incorporated into standing French units or organized as their own militias.

Despite a more in-depth discussion of actions that local commanders could take to build rapport, the pamphlet neither touched on the Viet Minh's ideological underpinnings nor mentioned Communism. This may represent a general weakness with many of the French manuals discussed: it proved quite difficult to expect field commanders, often of very junior rank, to fashion effective propaganda to "rally" Vietnamese to the French cause against an ideologically-motivated enemy when no comprehensive understanding of Communism or nationalism informed these political efforts.

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These discussions of counter-revolutionary war for Indochina provided sources and guidance, if sometimes conflicting, for French officers heading into the conflict in Algeria. Taking all these works together one can see that the French approach to counterinsurgency focused largely on armed enemies. Efforts to "pacify" the population were recommended although not with any suggestions of how to gauge "support" or what value it possessed beyond providing intelligence and hopefully preventing local people

[63] Bondis, *Instructions*, 15.

from joining the insurgency. At this point, pacification would seem rather difficult to operationalize – to translate into action – because none of its details were particularly well described. Each of the manuals and reports agreed upon the necessity of not using excessive force, respecting property, not offending local customs, placing local civilians in the lead, but these guidelines failed to give commanders the same kind of problem-solving approach that existed in conventional tactical instructions.

Likewise, most of the authors recognized the great potential of psychological warfare, but were not quite ready to agree on what it should look like. Several approaches were mutually exclusive and failed to address basic issues, such as whether to consolidate loudspeaker units and propaganda teams or decentralize them, and whether to focus propaganda on the citizens or on the enemy. Again, gauging the success of propaganda and psychological "weapons" was potentially even more elusive than determining whether or not a village was pacified. By the end of the first nine months of the war in Algeria, when the French army was finalizing its best effort at understanding its recent defeat, many great ideas circulated but few of them possessed the detail to make the link to field success.

1954- 1956: THE WAR TAKES SHAPE UNDER SOUSTELLE AND LORILLOT

Figure 2: Northern Algeria

The first two years of fighting in Algeria represented an ambiguous period for the French leadership, and they generated very little in terms of a clearly articulated strategy. Several early programs began, however, that generated some of the earliest "structural elements" underlying the French war in Algeria, structural elements that began to circumscribe field commanders' choices and helped mold a distinctive French strategic culture. One program originated with the civilian Governor General Jacques Soustelle, while the other plan came through a series of military channels.[64]

The French government believed police action could restore peace during the first nine months of war. The official line at the conflict's outset seems intentionally

[64] The civilian position Governor General was renamed as Resident Minister during the war to emphasize his status as representative of, rather than autonomous from, the French government.

optimistic. The government-sponsored journal *Revue de Défense Nationale* (RDN) reported in January that "an attempted uprising" had occurred on All Saints' Day, November 1st, of the prior year. An absolutely positive picture developed from the carnage: "the examples of loyalty with regard to France were numerous over the course of this tragic day and the testimonies of faithfulness continue to flow."[65] By March the section on Algeria had moved to the top of the "Chronicles of the French Union" section as the journal reported on Interior Secretary François Mitterand's plan to " reinforce governmental authority in a service as essential as security." The RDN also supported the likelihood that peace could be restored in the now-contentious Aurès Mountains through the intervention of regular troops, some of who were then returning from Indochina.[66] Military writers in the RDN tended to focus on atomic war, helicopters and tanks, and European politics, even as the conflict in Algeria simmered more intensely. With hindsight we know that these months marked only the beginning of a major conflict, but to the author of an article on "Africa and National Defense," the events in Algeria could be grouped in with other "attempted insurrections" such as those that occurred in Constantine (Algeria) in 1945, Madagascar in 1947, or in Kenya in 1952. The author believed they could be "snuffed out if the military reactions are immediate and decisive" which he credited with ending the post-WWII troubles so quickly in Algeria.[67] Caught

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[65] J.H. Gilmer, "Chronique de l'Union Française," *Revue de Défense Nationale* 20 (1955): 120.

[66] J.H. Gilmer, "Chronique de l'Union Française," *Revue de Défense Nationale* 20 (March 1955): 372-373.

[67] R. Laure, "L'Afrique et la défense nationale," *Revue de Défense Nationale* 20 (June 1955): 696-697. France still maintained substantial holdings in Africa, and this article is directed primarily at the importance of the sub-Sahara.

between the official advice of men like Nemo and Ély, and conventional wisdom that supported striking hard and quickly, the French government seemed unable to offer any strong proactive strategy, but rather incremental force increases. In May, "the government decided to reinforce the military with 10 battalions of infantry, a reconnaissance squadron, and 800 gendarmes."[68] The rebel forces would once again take the initiative in the next major development of the war.

The August 1955 massacre of 171 *pied-noirs* in the North Constantine region forced the government to remove its blinders regarding the size and scope of the "attempted uprising" in Algeria. Ten days later the National Assembly declared a state of emergency and approved calling up 57,000 reservists.[69] Nemo and Ély had recommended against using brute force to quell early instability. If the French government had made a strategic decision to employ a light hand from November 1954 to August 1955 to avoid backlashes against heavy excessive force, this would have matched those recommendations. Yet it seems the government was not following a programmatic strategy but instead responding to the limitations of tepid political will and a shortage of available troops (mostly either on duty in Germany or on their way home from Indochina). Since the leadership in Paris was unable to determine whether or not the nascent violence would lead to war, they engaged in some wishful thinking, ultimately unsuccessful, about the likelihood that police action alone would calm the storm.

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[68] J.H. Gilmer, "Chronique de l'Union Française," *Revue de Défense Nationale* 20 (November 1955): 119-120.

[69] Gilmer, "Chronique de l'Union Française," 512-513.

At the war's outbreak, only about 14,000 army troops of the some 58,000 stationed in Algeria were deployable to combat on short notice. Some 27,000 were on static duty (guard or training) and the remaining 17,000 were headquarters or support troops.[70] Jacques Soustelle, a career politician and trained ethnologist who was appointed Governor General in February 1955, was reported to have told the Algerian Assembly that "Algeria had experienced a "crisis of belief" that could be either helpful or harmful depending on whether the lessons learned were employed."[71] Years later, he remarked that "still, three months after the start of the rebellion, the government of the Metropole had not resolved itself to acknowledge that the situation in Algeria was what it was."[72] Soustelle, however, apparently recognized the rebellion immediately for it what it was, and the combination of endorsing force increases and measures he took early in the war would shape its strategic character for years to come. By the end of 1955, some 180,000 ground forces were operating in Algeria. By the end of 1956, that number grew to 355,000.[73]

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[70] Shrader, *The First Helicopter War*, 39.

[71] J.H. Gilmer, "Chronique de l'Union Française," *Revue de Défense Nationale* 20 (April 1955): 496-497.

[72] The French refer to mainland France as the "metropole." Le Mire, *Histoire Militaire de la Guerre d'Algérie*, 26.

[73] Shrader, *The First Helicopter War*, 41.

ARMY INITIATIVES EARLY IN THE WAR

In the intervening months between November 1954 and the start of Soustelle's reforms and the subsequent troop surge, military commanders in Algeria improvised their own methods to restore order in their sectors in the absence of any overarching strategy. One such leader was General Spillmann, the Commanding General of the Constantine Division in eastern Algeria, who had authored a set of orders for his sector that attracted the attention of leading members of the French defense establishment. In July 1955, Minister of National Defense, Pierre Koenig, and Minister of the Interior, Maurice Bourgès-Manoury, wrote to General Henri Lorillot, who had taken command of all French forces in Algeria the previous month. They believed it was time to apply a consistent doctrine to all of Algeria for subduing the rebels. They had determined that Spillman, commanding the Constantine Division, had devised effective methods to accomplish the desired return to peace and ordered that his "doctrine . . . be applied in the same ways, without restriction, in all of the Algerian departments."[74]

General Spillmann advocated a fairly active response to the "rebel bands," which he explained used commando-led sabotage and the fear of explosive charges to stop Muslims from supporting the French or partaking in French cultural activities. The French army, he said, should "adapt itself to operations more of the police than military type." Incidentally, he also recognized that the outcome of this engagement would carry

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[74] Pierre Koenig and Maurice Bourgès-Manoury, *Instruction fixant l'attitude à adopter vis-à-vis des rebelles in ALGÉRIE* (Paris: Ministère de la Défense Nationale, July 1, 1955), 1, 1H 2577, SHAT.

consequences, particularly that "the French army risks the loss of its prestige" if sufficient efforts were not made to bring the rebels back under French control.[75]

Spillmann essentially recommended a "shoot-first-ask-questions-later" approach: any rebels, people aiding rebels, or persons trying to escape should be fired upon. Any rebels or supporters not killed should be captured and turned over to local civilian authorities. His word choice probably over-simplified the tactical situation and assumed that his soldiers could easily distinguish rebels and rebel-supporters from regular inhabitants in the course of his recommended night raids and helicopter insertions. Intentionally or not, he ignored any possible political fall-out that might accompany hunting innocent men by mistake. This early advocacy for shooting suspects before detaining them favored the soldier's safety at the expense of the civilians whom they were ostensibly deployed to protect. The attitude that follows this practice would become normalized within the ranks quickly, and later army commanders who advocated policies of respect toward the civilians would have a difficult time re-programming the troops that had grown accustomed to looking after themselves first.

After allowing the general's order to speak for itself on the tactical situation, Koenig and Bourgès-Manoury weighed in to address their expectations of civil-military cooperation at all echelons and detailed precisely how leaders should divide responsibilities between themselves. In particular, "the civil authority has the direction and responsibility for all operations" while "the military commander has a choice of means to execute the missions that are asked of him by the civil authority. In any case however, he can not undertake any mission except with the approval of the legally

[75] Koenig and Bourgès-Manoury, *Instruction vis-à-vis des rebelles*, 2.

responsible civil authority, properly represented by administrative attachés or Officers of Indigenous Affairs."[76] Likewise, the ministers ordered civil and military authorities to coordinate closely in planning, and they ordered civilian authorities to support their military counterparts materially as necessary.[77]

General Spillman, by virtue perhaps of being the first general officer to coherently package his outlook toward fighting the insurgency into a discrete policy, proffered the first broad approach for countering the insurgency that was disseminated through directives to the field commanders. This policy, endorsed by the highest echelons of army leadership, and which expected civil-military cooperation, became the first official method for dealing with insurgents. A musician cannot improvise a jazz riff without an underlying melody. Spillman's directive, in this case, became the melody and baseline against which commanders would improvise solutions to their specific problems. While riffs can be highly creative, they must maintain enough connection to the melody that a listener understands the relationship. Similarly, while commanders at this point may have retained the potential for tremendous creativity, their choices now had a baseline not present before, a baseline that effectively endorsed a shoot-first ask-questions-later approach.

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[76] Koenig and Bourgès-Manoury, *Instruction vis-à-vis des rebelles*, 4.

[77] Basic counterinsurgency outlooks often revolve around the order of events: (1) kill and capture rebels first and then co-opt whomever remains, probably requiring a second rebel hunt after co-opting has run its course; (2) kill and capture while simultaneously building local civilian rapport and running social works projects; (3) try to co-opt as many locals and rebels through rapport-building and social works projects until such time as all moderates have chosen a side, after which it is appropriate to hunt down the remaining rebels. We will return to this divide later, although I will not openly favor one approach over the other in this paper as choosing recommended strategies is not this project's intent.

SOUSTELLE'S DIRECTIVES

Jacques Soustelle, who took over as the incoming civilian governor general in February 1955, wrote a series of directives that he passed through Commanding General Henri Lorillot to the ground forces. Soustelle believed that only a complete re-structuring of political, social, and economic life could save Algeria, and he was determined to undertake these reforms from the start. Although Soustelle's reform plan was never fully approved, he initiated several projects that required significant military cooperation – to the extent that adapting to his directives, while not related to combat missions, would have reshaped daily for ground commanders and their units. He established the Special Administrative Sections (SAS), decreed that units would foster "auto-defense" and *harki* (local militia) units, and he ordered the army to participate in public works programs.

Soustelle's programs performed two functions on French strategic culture in Algeria. First, they required expenditure of soldiers for non-combat tasks. There was an expectation that units might assist SAS teams with protective security details or help them engage local leaders. Units were expected to commit soldiers and leaders to recruiting, training, and supervising the local militias, and soldiers would of course be needed to plan and oversee the public works projects intended to keep the local men gainfully employed (and out of active collusion with the insurgency). Second, his policies created benchmarks against which military accomplishment could be measured. Whether it was the number of schools built, roads opened, harki trained and recruited, this was the start of a period requiring army leaders to submit reports detailing the *number* of items on a particular list they had accomplished. These "metrics," as they are known, would I

believe, begin to drastically circumscribe the operational flexibility and autonomy open to commanders.[78] Once an expectation developed – much like a volume quota for a salesman –a certain tyranny of numbers ensues. If certain quotas were established and required, commanders could either devote necessary forces to meet them or they could fabricate data. Anecdotal evidence indicates both probably occurred. There can come a time, however, wherein the expected requirements overload the possible work capacity of the unit, at which point a commander can explain that his resources are insufficient to meet the task assigned, he can go overboard and drive his unit into the ground, or again, he can falsify his reports. The irony is that these programs were all designed to bring positive gains to the country, and in principle were probably well-advised programs. It is not clear that Soustelle, or commanders creating policies of this nature, often consider whether persistent programs of this kind align with the resources at hand for units and with those commanders' previously understood primary missions. Soustelle's programs were not intended to *replace* the army's combat mission but only serve as an adjunct task. Yet once a program becomes elaborated and enumerated, it can take on a life and influence of its own beyond the original ends of its designers.

Together with the earlier recommendations from the Ministry of Defense that civil and military authorities should fully cooperate on equal footing and that rebels should be hunted with lethal prejudice, by late 1955, a strategic culture had begun to set in for the war in Algeria that would continue to influence the military's outlook about its

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[78] Daddis explains that the US Army in Vietnam adopted an increasingly complex set of metrics such that "complications arose from attempting to collect too many facts, figures, and statistics without evaluating how accurately such data reflected progress in a complex political-military environment." Gregory Daddis, "The Problem of Metrics: Assessing U.S. Army Progress and Effectiveness in the Vietnam War" (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Spring).

mission and the means to accomplish it. This strategic culture emphasized the importance of hunting and killing rebels, a military task, but expected cooperation between the military and civilian administrators when possible, and tasked the army to begin performing functions outside its standard combat role, namely supporting SAS teams; recruiting, training, and overseeing *harki*, and engaging in public works programs. We will now examine some of the specific directives and policy guidance Soustelle undertook to reinforce his expectations.

Governor General Soustelle believed that improving relations with the Muslim population should be the first order of business. In July 1955, four months after taking office, he wrote all his prefects (civil administrators in charge of county-sized areas) to explain that they and their subordinates should waste no time in re-establishing strong connections with the local population despite the apparent urgency of other situations.[79] To that end, he decided that the "bureaux arabes" concept would remain in place. The Arab Bureau functioned as an intermediary between civil government and the Muslim population, and tried not only to improve quality of life for Muslims, but often took their side in disputes with the European-descended "pied-noirs."[80] In vivid terms, Soustelle demanded that his subordinates renounce some of their long-held prejudices and trade their "office armchairs for the sofas of local notables" and to consider not only being people who commanded others, but leaders who "explain, counsel, encourage,

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[79] Jacques Soustelle, *Politique du contact* (Algiers: Gouverneur General d'Algerie, July 22, 1955), 1, 1H 2577, SHAT.

[80] Soustelle, *Politique du contact*, 3.

convince."[81] Among his directives were that "contact will not be delegated." In his mind, "personal and authentic contact is more useful than ostentatious gestures." Speaking Arabic or Berber was preferred to having interpreters, and he warned them to "never abuse confidences received." He also encouraged the creation of "private relations" with prominent members of the local communities, understanding that people prefer to work with those whom they mutually like.[82]

Despite the explicit instructions contained in his July memorandum, by November Soustelle had determined that his prefects and military commanders were not following his guidance, an opinion he expressed in another memorandum.[83] He elaborated on his expectations for conduct, specifically toward the Muslim population. Rather than adopt a traditionalist, naïve "*image d'Epinal*" outlook toward the Muslims and French as two clearly divided camps, Soustelle urged military and civilian leaders at all levels to develop a more nuanced view.[84] In underlined typeface, Soustelle declared "the gravest error will be by showing the people, by our words, our attitude, our actions, a general suspicion; this will discourage good will and give the game to our adversaries." He stated that the French would not win unless "the people understand our intentions [. . .] and help us voluntarily." While military action should be swift, it should also be just, and avoid any unnecessary harming of innocent people. He reiterated again the requirement to turn

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[81] Soustelle, *Politique du contact*, 4.

[82] Soustelle, *Politique du contact*, 6-9.

[83] Jacques Soustelle, *Attitude à observer à l'égard des populations musulmanes dans la lutte contre le terrorisme*, November 22, 1955, 1-3, 1H 2577, SHAT.

[84] An *Image d'Epinal* was a 19th century form of art marked by simplified representation and bright colors which became synonymous with a traditionalist and naïve outlook.

over all apprehended persons to the civil authorities and specifically forbade "blind reprisals." Likewise, he prohibited collective punishments and brutal treatment of the people. "Our mission is to reestablish order and peace, not against the Muslim population, but for it and with it." Hearkening back to their colonial forebears, Soustelle conjured General Gallieni, the 19th-century exponent of colonialism who had carried the message that "political action is more important" than military action in pacification, as he explained that Galliéni's "oil spot" technique of pacification would work serve the modern French army in Algeria.[85]

Soustelle's repeat order indicated his commitment to ensuring that his vision was not only sent but also received and understood by subordinate leaders. Within days, Lorillot ordered 1,500 copies, then distributed Soustelle's directive to his commanders, sponsoring it as "confirming and reinforcing all the directives I've given on this subject."[86] While Lorillot's supporting message may seem at face value rather defensive, he published directives four months later in late March 1956 that reinforced the importance of establishing positive relations. Specifically, he requested that every man take it as his "duty to explore confident contact with the Muslim population."

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[85] The "oil spot" technique was the idea that pacification would start by create a trading post, use local patrols to secure roads and nearby markets, and then create another trading post in the newly secured area. Over time these secured areas would spread out across the countryside as would spots of oil upon a flat surface. In imagery, it seems similar to Nemo's *rayonnement*. Porch explains however that this "progressive occupation" (another term Galliéni used) was not particularly successful and that the French actually made far more effective use of armed columns called *razzia,* yet the success of the "hearts and minds" approach persisted in France because it served a much better public relations purpose. Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 388, 394.

[86] Henri Lorillot, *Attitude à observer à l'égard des populations musulmanes dans la lutte contre le terrorisme*, December 16, 1955, 1, 1H 2577, SHAT.

Commanders should make use of the "French strain" of men (French-descended Algerians) recruited in Algeria who spoke Arabic, as well as those among the Muslim veterans who really knew the population well, to ensure his goal that "the French strain and the Muslim population must not only live together, they must renew the friendship dedicated by so many examples."[87]

Lorillot's and Soustelle's call for civil relations between the military and the local population was a key plank in their pacification strategy, but they also had more concrete plans of action in the SAS, Harkis, and Public Works projects. Even with those programs, however, it remained to be seen whether the messages and programs between 1956 and 1958, in the words of one officer, "failed to meet the urgent need for precise instructions at the bottom."[88]

SAS – SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECTIONS

In September 1955, Soustelle created a unique political zone (and associated mission) known as the SAS (*Sections Administratives Specialisées*), the Special Administrative Section.[89] The *caïds* who administered the mixed-communes for the French government had been gradually losing power of the people under their charge, and many of these mixed-communes were redesignated as SAS, which would be initially administered by a military officer, the "SAS chief," until he could find local persons to

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[87] Henri Lorillot, *Directives concernant les Relations avec les populations musulmanes*, March 30, 1956, 1H 2577, SHAT.

[88] Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, xix.

[89] Le Mire, *Histoire Militaire de la Guerre d'Algérie*, 388.

stand for election.[90] The SAS chiefs in part adopted the role that the *bureaux arabes* had filled, but was actually started by a team of 15 officers from the Moroccan Indigenous Affairs bureau and the Saharan Affairs bureau (Algeria). They were expected to make up for the chronic "under-administration" (*sous-administration*) plaguing Algeria and were responsible for "the coordination of civil and military measures against the uprising in the regions subject to the state of emergency in Constantine [at this point under the aforementioned General Spillmann]."[91] Charged with living in the rural *douars* (villages), the SAS officer had an accountant, a medic, and an adjutant to help him tend to physical needs of the people under his care. He was technically a military officer although he primarily reported to the civilian administrators rather than to the military hierarchy. He was expected to undertake any civil actions that could win the population's grassroots support: rebuild schools and town halls, improve roads, fix irrigation, and instruct the people about the virtues of France and French values, just to name a few possible activities.[92]

The SAS mission created a new structural element that shaped army operations. Once Soustelle fully spelled out the role of the SAS officer, it is possible that the SAS mission could have normalized the army to the idea that pacification and public works programs only became an army responsibility *in the absence* of an SAS officer. In many cases, there were not enough SAS officers. At the height of the program in 1960, only

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[90] Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 192.

[91] "Les sections administratives spécialisées et les sciences sociales," in *Militaires et guérilla dans la guerre d'Algérie* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 2001), 383-385.

[92] Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 188-211; Le Mire, *Histoire Militaire de la Guerre d'Algérie*, 129-131.

700 hastily re-trained officers served in SAS assignments, which would have left several thousand communities without a direct SAS liaison. Since commanders already had missions to occupy their units, the death or reassignment of an SAS officer would leave a shortage that the army was expected to fill. Although armies strive for elasticity and try to bend when necessary, commanders would have had to shuffle units around to compensate, a task easier conceptualized than accomplished.[93] Recognizing this problem, Soustelle requested additional funding from France for funding public works projects that the army would later be able to make extensive use of once directed to undertake civil functions in 1956.

SOUSTELLE'S PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

Indeed, public works was another key program of Soustelle's that would become another structural element shaping the army's strategic culture. At the end of 1955, he developed a new financing plan for public works projects and disseminated the framework to prefects in Algiers, Bone, Constantine, and Oran. Specifically, the plan created a new source of funding for projects –such as school-building– that were not sufficiently supported under the old budgeting structure, "TIC" (*Travaux d'Initiative Communale* – Communal Works Initiative). The two new "rubrics" under which projects were grouped were "Special Equipment Program for Accelerating the Modernization of Specific Rural Areas" and "Communal Works Initiative for Village Administrative Equipment," presumably programs that could cover a large umbrella of projects. Money for regular TIC projects could be used for any community, but the Special Program

[93] In some cases, like Galula's, the commanding officer desired companies to stay consolidated when possible rather than split up to reach more villages. Galula split two of his platoons out to remote sites over time. Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 95-100.

money could be used only for the "mixed communities" (inhabited by Muslims, administered by a Frenchman) and for the municipal centers related to them.[94] Later, in 1956, the new administrator Robert Lacoste would expand upon this program under an "Emergency Program."[95]

Now that funding was in place for the army to conduct public works projects, there was the expectation that the army would begin spending time and energy on these programs. The commanding general, General Lorillot, wanted to know exactly how the army was following Soustelle's guidance. In early 1956, he issued a seemingly minor order that would have large repercussions for army operations: commanders were required to report on their pacification operations within each and every daily bulletin.[96] Referencing this memorandum, Colonel Tabouis, Lorillot's chief of psychological operations, wrote his divisional bureau chiefs along the same lines. He explained that it was in the army's best interest to publicize the extent of activities that occurred beyond the narrow field of policing. In particular, bureau chiefs were also expected to submit reports of pacification activities weekly, which could include "repairs of destruction and sabotage, new construction, help to economic activity (farms, industry, roadways), aid to the populations affected by terrorism or natural calamities, medical assistance, etc." Tabouis would then ensure these activities would be publicized through press releases.[97] These orders had a two-fold effect. First, by creating mandatory and regular reporting

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[94] Maurice Cuttoli, *Equipment des régions rurales*, December 1, 1955, 1H 2538, SHAT.

[95] P Chaussade, *Application d'un programme d'urgence*, July 9, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT.

[96] Henri Lorillot, *Note du Service: Bulletins quotidiens*, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT.

[97] Tabouis, *Effort de Pacification - Action de l'Armée*, February 7, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT.

requirements, commanders knew the areas in which they would be expected to demonstrate continual progress. Second, Tabouis's interest in publicizing divisional efforts could have created a certain competitive atmosphere among commanders determined to ensure their areas did not go without regular press releases (which would of course boost the commander's reputation, if not indicate actual progress).

Since these programs had no explicit endstate or time period for completion, and commanders were now forced to submit daily progress reports, there was the potential for this program to absorb more time and effort from commanders than Lorillot and Soustelle may have intended. The constant generation of public works programs became a structural element that field commanders had to deal with routinely. The public works program policy fits my definition of structural element because commanders had to adapt their forces, and exert time and energy creating public works, in order to please the needs of higher headquarters, but these public works were not directly linked to combat operations or explicitly tied to local progress for those commanders. While there is no doubt that Soustelle and Lorillot believed the army would achieve some vague local improvements by improving quality of life for villagers, the addition of a specific reporting requirement for all commanders to comply with meant that *every area* in Algeria now needed public works projects. It became the program for every commander to follow, not an initiative suited better to some areas than others. Although commanders could choose how they wanted to follow it, this program became a sales game: numbers and production of public works would look good at higher headquarters and indicate progress, even if the numbers and projects were not actually tied to any local measure of improved security or compliance with French policies. Later, the command in Algiers

would disseminate matrices to record accomplishments (schools built, roads improved, enemy killed) in a numerical format, making it quite easy for higher command to compare efficacy of units, depending on how one interpreted the data.[98] The end result was that while public works projects *might* have been exactly what every local area needed, the measure of success was the volume and size of projects, not necessarily whether those projects generated desired effects in establishing or maintaining peace. To complicate matters, if an area really needed a focus on combat operations, the local commander would not be as free to pursue that option because he would be tied to producing daily progress reports on his public works projects.

In early 1957, the army estimated the cost and benefits of the public works programs both in labor and capital-equivalent costs. The public works programs conducted in 1956 cost 19 billion francs in contracts and provided a benefit of about 18.5 billion francs worth of soldier and local Algerian worker hours. (See Figure 3) Additionally, soldiers injected roughly 50 billion francs into the local economy through spending.

[98] For example, does fewer enemy killed in one sector vice another mean that one commander is less capable in finding the enemy or that he has pacified his area better?

COST OF ARMY OPERATIONS IN ALGERIA, 1956

ACTIVITY	COST IN MEN & FRANCS	EQUIVALENT BENEFIT
CONTRACTS	**19 BILLION FRANCS**	
ENGINEER OPERATIONS		**3 BILLION FRANCS**
MATERIALS		700 MILLION FRANCS
MECHANICS		1,500 MILLION FRANCS
FUEL		170 MILLION FRANCS
8,400,00 KM OF ROAD DEDICATED FOR VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION		840 MILLION FRANCS
PACIFICATION EFFORTS		**9.5 BILLION FRANCS**
PUBLIC WORKS WORKERS	10,000 SOLDIERS WORKER SECURITY	5 BILLION FRANCS (LOCAL LABOR) 2,350 KM NEW/IMPROVED ROADS
EDUCATION	500 ARMY OFFICERS	500 MILLION FRANCS 315 SCHOOLS OPENED 23,000 NEW STUDENTS ENROLLED
MEDICAL & DENTAL AID	500 DOCTORS AND DENTISTS	225,000 CONSULTATIONS 3.7 BILLION FRANCS
S.A.S.	963 OFFICERS AND NCOS	350 MILLION FRANCS
POLICING (BENEFIT OF TROOPS PERFORMING THE FUNCTION INSTEAD OF HIRING POLICE)		**6 BILLION FRANCS** 5 BILLION FRANCS (ELITE TROOPS) 1 BILLION FRANCS (TO BREAK STRIKE)
COMBINED FOR 1956	**19 BILLION FRANCS** **2,000 OFFICERS, NCOS, CLINICIANS** **10,000 SOLDIERS**	**18.5 BILLION FRANCS** **2,350 KM NEW/IMPROVED ROAD** **315 SCHOOLS/23,000 STUDENTS**

Figure 3[99]: Cost of Army Operations, 1956

The report accounted for the benefit of using less expensive locals or troops to provide certain functions like engineering work, education, or policing. The report's authors estimated that not only did the benefits of work essentially equal the cost paid for

[99] 4th Bureau, 10th Military Region, "Sur les 'prestations' assurees aux departements civils par les forces de l'ordre de la Xeme region militaire", 1957, 1H 2538, SHAT.

them (which seems to be what should be expected for services rendered) but they estimated the cost of services provided by Algerian workers as equaling between a fifth and a tenth of the cost of similar work provided by French laborers. [100] An accompanying report entitled "Contributions of the Army to the Work of Pacification" provided line graphs that showed the tremendous increases in roads improved, children schooled, and sick cared for during the course of 1956, but failed to tie these statistics to any actual measure of improvement. Each of these tasks certainly benefited the local situation generally, but the lack of any supporting text gives the impression that the numbers should have spoken suitably for themselves.[101] Additionally, the focus on the bottom line imparts an importance to saving money through these projects that was not convincingly related to improving the security situation in the country in any appreciable way, but bureaucracies have a tendency to measure what is measurable and in this case spending is measurable for public works projects so cost-savings rather than a more nebulous measure of "effectiveness" received the analytical focus.

LOGISTICS IN THE ALGERIAN WAR

One of the first established, and most critical "structural elements" in any conflict is the framework for logistics. Regardless of the expectations that the Governor General or Commanding General might have of field commanders, one unassailable fact of life

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[100] 4th Bureau, 10th Military Region, "Sur les 'prestations' assurees aux departements civils par les forces de l'ordre de la Xeme region militaire." This report does not include a formal cover letter or date stamp, but the summary paragraph indicates that it reviews work for 1956. The table is a self-made roll-up of data provided in paragraph form in the report.

[101] 4th Bureau, 10th Military Region, *Contribution de l'armée a l'œuvre de pacification*, 1957, 1H 2538, SHAT; Roy, *The war in Algeria*, 11.

was that soldiers needed food, ammunition, working weapons, and properly fueled and maintained vehicles. Thus, the logistical system simultaneously sustained and constrained the operations and the degree of operational vision field commanders could exercise in the translation of received strategy into executed practice. And like the public works program, Soustelle's initial directives, and the army's early initiatives, the French army's logistical system, rooted in prewar institutional systems, early established itself as a defining structure for the rest of the war.

The French Army's basic logistical framework pre-dated hostilities and was composed of fixed facilities and mobile service units, although both were "organized primarily on a territorial rather than a unit basis and were thus better suited to operations from fixed bases rather than to mobile warfare."[102] The French army operated a stove-piped, or parallel logistics system in which supply officers reported up their own chains of command rather than directly to a unit or area commander, although they had responsibilities to provide service to specific echelons.[103] In other words, while a Sector Commander, typically a colonel, would be ultimately responsible for ensuring that all the units under his command were properly resupplied, and had to coordinate through the logistics commander tasked to his sector, that logistics commander answered to a higher-ranking logistician rather than to the sector commander. Despite this arrangement, the French combat unit commanders and logistics commanders appear to have operated effectively with one another.

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[102] Shrader, *The First Helicopter War*, 54.

[103] Shrader, *The First Helicopter War*, 58-59.

Shrader's study of French logistics in Algeria, the only major treatment of the subject, does not zero in on specific unit problems, but he does suggest that the French government's limited commitment of funds for the war resulted in a climate of thrift in most areas of supply, especially ammunition and diesel fuel. Additionally, the call-up of reservists in 1955 occasioned the need for much more food and water, ammunition, and diesel fuel for these troops as well. Depots experienced some stress keeping pace with demand. Overall, while it does not appear that there were too many significant logistical crises, some nagging problems persisted. These included a general lack of effective operator-level maintenance in most units, an increasing lack of skilled vehicle and weapons technicians, and the need for logistics units to protect themselves across larger distances as they re-supplied and refitted units. These problems led field commanders to spend time they might have used on operations to ensure that their soldiers accounted for and maintained all of their equipment properly so as not to further tax the relatively stressed support network.[104]

From a commander's perspective, severe limitations on available training ammunition, fuel for trucks, food and water, lumber and fortification supplies, all limit the scope of operational creativity. Additionally, a territorially-based logistics structure, which as mentioned worked better for major garrisoning from fixed sites, made it much more difficult to reposition major headquarters to new areas as the tactical situation changed. Additionally, French soldiers coming from France, conscripts in particular, would have been accustomed to a higher standard of living than would be readily available in Algeria without the overtaxed support of the French logistical corps. Keeping

[104] Shrader, *The First Helicopter War*, 72-93.

units supplied not only with the basics, but also with the kind of food and provisioning they would expect as French soldiers created an extra logistical burden. To draw a large stereotype, men from industrialized countries expect regular hot meals, opportunities to bathe, recreational diversions, and other luxuries that commanders factor in to the maintenance of morale and fighting strength.

Before moving into the discussion of the period 1956 to 1958, we will take a moment to consider what a serving officer had to say about the nature of the war in 1956.

ENTERING 1956: PERCEPTIONS ON THE GROUND

Lieutenant Colonel David Galula is well known among the American military for his two books on counterinsurgency, one of which he authored while a research associate at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs following the war.[105] From 1956 to 1958, he commanded a company in the 45th Colonial Infantry Battalion in the Kabylie region east of Algiers and then served as battalion operations officer. Several of his experiences highlight the difficulty of transmitting general strategic expectations successfully down to the operational level. His reflections in 1956 neatly problematize complexities of transmitting strategy effectively (with original emphasis):

> The French for their part realized that military action by itself could not put a permanent end to the insurgency. If a rebel band was destroyed, the rebels' political organization, strongly entrenched in the masses of the people, would create another. Ultimate victory, therefore, depended on the ability of the French to win over the population. But, while the central authorities acknowledged the

[105] Despite their republished dates, Galula wrote these books in the early 1960s. His theories were incorporated into the US Army's 2006 counterinsurgency doctrine. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006); Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*; Ann Marlowe, *David Galula: his Life and Intellectual Context* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010), 48.

> principle of a systematic pacification effort and instructed their officers in the field accordingly, ***they lacked agreement on method.*** Despite their experience in Indochina and other insurgent theaters, ***they had yet to formulate a concrete counterinsurgent doctrine applicable to the realities of the Algerian situation.*** The order to "pacify" therefore was variously interpreted by the officers in the field, among whom the company commanders, in particular, bore the burden of its execution. There were the "warriors," who believed in the efficacy of military conquest and intimidation, and the "psychologists," who put their faith in persuasion and other psychological means with show of force. But the large majority of commanders were not committed to either extreme; they were faced with a multitude of concrete problems to which each improvised his own answers. The broad-level directives, sound thought they were, failed to meet the urgent need for precise instructions at the bottom.[106]

Despite some successes from the first two years of the war, military leadership could not claim to endorse any single way of war for the ground commanders to follow. Pacification over the next several years would reflect efforts to break the military and organizational back of the insurgency through large-scale missions together with an increased focus upon programs that simultaneously incorporated and segregated local Algerians, in particular recruiting more of them as harkis, and regrouping steadily more villages.

1956-1958: LACOSTE AND SALAN INTENSIFY PACIFICATION

By 1956, the several practices mentioned in the previous section had been shaping a unique strategic culture in Algeria for nearly two years. Included among these practices was the idea that the military should build strong relations with both the Muslim populations and the *pied noirs*, hopefully with the intent of assisting the two communities

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[106] Galula admits to keeping no journal and since he wrote his own book on counterinsurgency warfare theory, it is certainly plausible he had reasons for misremembering, ignoring, or marginalizing any strategy extant at the time he served in Algeria. I do not remember whether I read this quotation before creating my own research question, but his thoughts certainly helped me believe in the possibility that I would find more evidence to corroborate this. Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, xix.

to live together amicably. SAS officers, when available, maintained primary responsibility for village-building rather than the army units, which were expected to submit daily reports on "pacification" as mentioned, although the expectations for measuring pacification remained fairly vague. The Center for Training and Preparation for Counter-Guerrilla War (CIPCG), discussed later, had just begun to institutionalize leaders in the tenets of *guerre révolutionnaire* and psychological war. At the beginning of the year, Jacques Soustelle still occupied the top spot at Governor General, though Robert Lacoste would replace him in March and initiate new reform initiatives.[107] Lacoste's reform initiatives marked not so much a break as perhaps an intensification of Soustelle's program. Henri Lorillot continued serving as commanding general until December, when Raoul Salan, another veteran of Indochina, replaced him.[108] Together with Salan's Battle of Algiers, the period 1956 through the end of 1958, taken as a whole, marked an intensification and entrenchment of the strategic culture in Algeria that had begun forming in the war's first two years, as roles became firmly established and attitudes toward the population more heavily ingrained.

LACOSTE – ARMY COOPERATION, SOCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

"The great affair of our country is to find a way of agreement with the local peoples [of Algeria] . . . Without North Africa, France would no longer be France."[109]

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[107] Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 151.

[108] Montagnon, *Histoire de l'Armée Française: des Milices Royales à l'Armée de Métier*, 298.

[109] Pierre Brana, *Robert Lacoste, 1898-1989: de la Dordogne à l'Algérie, un socialiste devant l'histoire* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 182. Re-election speech in Périgueux, France, 15 October 1955, four months before his appointment to Algeria.

Robert Lacoste, a career government official and socialist party member who had spent most of his political career on domestic labor issues, would put his considerable experience to play in attempting a broad set of social and administrative reforms in Algeria. An original member of the French Resistance, he suffered the loss of his father in 1944 to a German firing squad in their hometown, which he would represent for many years later as a French Senator.[110] Prime Minister Guy Mollet first selected the aging General Georges Catroux, a former Governor General of Algeria who had proposed equal French citizenship for all Algerians, to reprise his former position and replace Soustelle as Governor General in early 1956. Yet Catroux had also overseen the independence of Syria and Libya, and mobs of Algerian *pieds noir,* fearful their country was next on the chopping block, so heckled Catroux before his term in office had really begun that Mollet realized keeping Catroux on would be a significant political liability.[111] He selected Lacoste, initially appointed as the new Economic Minister, to replace Catroux in February 1956. Mollet installed Lacoste as the "minister résidant" or the lead minister of France in Algeria, a titular demotion for the departément's chief civilian from the post's former title of "gouverneur générale," a position that carried a sense of command wielding considerable more autonomy.[112]

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[110] Brana, *Robert Lacoste, 1898-1989*, 124.

[111] Brana, *Robert Lacoste, 1898-1989*, 182-183.

[112] Brana, *Robert Lacoste, 1898-1989*, 186. In French *résidant* is the present participle of *résider* and confers the meaning of someone "living" in a place. Its use was apparently an intended alteration of the standard *résid**e**nt*, the word typically used in the context of *ministre résident* or *résident générale* meaning a diplomatic agent of the state. Despite these cuts in his title, Lacoste would wield considerable influence in Algeria.

Despite the relative demotion in power, Lacoste immediately sought increased executive power for his new government to undertake sweeping social, economic, and administrative reforms. In March, the French legislature voted to permit him "special powers" for this purpose. After taking several months to form his program, Lacoste addressed the French army at large on his policies for the first time on May 19, 1956. The day before, a patrol of conscripts had been ambushed, their bodies mutilated, only days after arriving in Algeria. This, the first major incident involving troops called up involuntarily for service, created a perfect opportunity for Lacoste to explain himself and his new policies to the army.[113] In his first General Directive, he explained that he would always provide unconditional support to their efforts to restore peace in Algeria, but that he also expected them to follow his guidance and become an example within Algeria. Lacoste discussed the dual nature of Algeria, explained as the tension of a "French strain" living alongside Muslims. The events that had occurred in Algeria, he wrote, were "one aspect of a gigantic world conflict where certain Muslim countries have collapsed in disorder, searching, following Hitlerian methods, to install an invasive dictator across parts of the African continent."[114]

In accord with the views he expressed in his October 1955 re-election speech, Lacoste then stated emphatically, "the dominant preoccupation of my politics is determined by the necessity to seal the relations between the two local communities in returning their confidence in one another, and everyone's confidence in the Metropole."

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[113] Brana, *Robert Lacoste, 1898-1989*, 197.

[114] Robert Lacoste, *Directive Generale*, Directive (Algiers: Le Ministre Residant en Algerie, May 19, 1956), 2, 1H 2408, SHAT.

To that end, Lacoste believed it was necessary to lead an economic and social transformation in Algeria that would raise the Muslims' standard of living to that of other western countries, and to better integrate the personnel employed in the country's governance. Finally, he advocated a basic political education for all Muslim youth. He explained that he would offer political reforms very soon that would involve local elections and a greater share of governance by the people, eventually resulting in the retirement of the *caïd* structure whereby Muslims appointed by the French served as their delegates in charge of communities.[115]

Lacoste then spelled out his social and administrative reforms. He explained a number of measures designed to increase native Algerian access to and share in government. Not only would French-Muslims be favored for jobs in the administration, but Lacoste would grant extensions to those nearing retirement, and he ordered that two-thirds of the vacant slots for "auxiliaries" must be recruited from among the French-Muslim population. The new policy also provided for benefits for old persons: war veterans among French-Muslims received hiring preferences, as Lacoste believed that they, in particular, had been overlooked. Administratively, Lacoste explained the creation of eight new administrative districts under the terms of a new French Ministry of Justice decree of 17 March that granted full civil judicial powers in Algeria to the military. This proliferation of districts and their associated sub-districts created more special administrative sections, which allowed Lacoste to enlarge the SAS corps by some 600 to 700 officers.

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[115] Lacoste, *Directive Generale*, 2.

Having explained all that must be accomplished in Algeria in order to maintain its status within the French world, Lacoste set out his expectations for the army. He expected it to re-establish order, firmly, but without "abusing this directive." To the point, "I am sure you will have the heart to remain humane as required by the honor of France." Foreseeing the kind of negative international public opinion that the rebels might try to create by instigating "acts of uncontrolled reprisal" from the French forces, Lacoste warned the army to maintain discipline at all times, and asked all the officers and sergeants to oversee the execution of his orders to ensure compliance.[116]

Lacoste's general directive, then, while not exactly an "operational" order of any kind, imposed upon the army certain expectations for what civil society should look like, that preference would be given to Muslims in certain respects, and that soldiers were expected to treat local people with proper respect. Orders such as these represented the intention of the new civilian authority in Algeria, but it remained to be seen if his philosophy would penetrate into the army in the field, an army already imbued with its own strategic and organizational culture. Infected with, per Isabel Hull's definition, their own "habitual practices, default programs, hidden assumptions and unreflected cognitive frames" operational commanders struggled to make their practices conform to Lacoste's expectations. Communiqués such as Lacoste's general directive entered into the discourse of Algerian War strategic culture that began with the starting views held by officers based on their experiences in Indochina, was modified in the first months of the war by initial experiences and General Spillmans' policy, then later by Soustelle and

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[116] Lacoste, *Directive Generale*, 3-4.

Lorillot's various programs and which was now modified by Lacoste's reforms.[117] By the time Lacoste had been appointed and issued his directive, the French army in Algeria had become accustomed during the Soustelle-Lorillot administration to receiving guidance from both civilian and military leaders and sending reporting requirements up military channels that originated in civilian offices.

LACOSTE'S 3-STEP PROGRAM FOR PACIFICATION

Following a June conference, Lacoste wrote to his primary civilian and military subordinates to explain his three-step program for pacification. He desired the commanders to use the coming swell of troops to achieve results before the winter arrived. Lacoste explained that he had finished delegating authority to the prefects to "not only suspend but silence" any functionaries that obstructed pacification efforts. Along these lines, he stressed the importance of decentralizing responsibilities. Lacoste expressed his intent to abolish the mixed communes. Lacoste then discussed pacification, which he said was so widespread in usage as a word that it had lost the strength of its meaning. To his mind, it implied that a complex of actions both civil and military would be used to restore order. He recognized that situations varied across the country, but nonetheless suggested that pacification should follow a three-step program, beginning with "security of persons and property" and the "pursuit and destruction" of rebel forces. Step two would require taking an entire census of the people, photographing them, and issuing identity cards, while also improving morale. The third step would involve the

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[117] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 4. Hull discusses how German army colonial experiences influenced the army's culture leading into the First World War.

"establishment of specific institutions" to coordinate relations between the population and the civil and military administrations. Meanwhile, he stressed that efforts should be made to give work, not simply money, to the unemployed, and attempt to improve their quality of life.

Lacoste recognized the difficult position that the local Muslim population faced, both being terrorized by the rebels yet not accepted by the French-Algerians either, and ordered several actions taken to mitigate this. First, he again stressed the importance of making personal contacts with the local population and ordered that everyone employed by the memo's recipients should do the same. Foreseeing "the brutal rupture of traditional equilibrium that the establishment of profound reforms might risk provoking," he supported appointing locals to work in certain public positions, even when elections would typically be the means to select them. When possible, however, he recommended creating "mixed commissions" of several dozen French-Muslims who would be elected at the lowest levels. Regardless of method used for selection, he expected that the civil and military authorities should quickly have a small body of locals to help in a "consultative" manner with pacification. Finally, he endorsed any and all initiatives that might improve relations and public opinion between the metropole and Muslims in Algeria, to include exchange students and vacation opportunities. Lacoste emphasized the critical importance of psychological action, but also the press.[118]

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[118] Lacoste, *Minister Residant's thoughts on Current Situation*; Gaffney, *Political leadership in France*, 7. Gaffney suggests that one of the main changes in the public sphere of French politics following de Gaulle's ascent in 1958 was the importance of the media and public opinion because of the larger-than-life persona and drama he brought with him to office, though clearly some farsighted leaders such as Lacoste were already trying to harness the power of opinion too.

Lacoste's three-step program reinforced the significance of working with local populations in a cooperative, non-coercive manner, and in so doing tried to establish a willingness in French officials to engender a genuine interest in the well being of the local people. Not only would his program require a tremendous amount of physical effort and organization, such as to make a census of the country and issue identity cards to everyone, but he expected a certain level of moral effort in working with the Algerians that not everyone was capable of providing.[119]

In November 1956, Lorillot's intelligence section reported on the success of pacification based on Lacoste's summer time policies. Probably written for the upcoming meeting of chiefs of staff scheduled for later that month the report indicated that the army's results were not commensurate to the efforts expended, particularly in light of the tremendous troop increase initiated over the summer. The army had focused more intently on building contact and rapport with local peoples, arming and training self-defense groups, undertaking public works, and assisting the civil administration, while trying not to abandon its mission to restore order. The authors implicitly admitted some shortcomings with using social science to peer into the Algerian mind. Since "the evolution of the psychological climate of the host Muslim populations has not obeyed any precise law," it would be difficult to predict exactly how they would respond to various strategies. Nonetheless, the coming months were judged a critical time for winning over the population while capitalizing on what appeared to be a "seriously shaken" enemy. Despite these seeming military successes, the authors exposed a fundamental dilemma: "while it is simple to account for [successes] on the material

[119] Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare*, 82; Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 44-45.

plane, it is a delicate matter to evaluate the profound repercussions upon the psychological domain." The authors confronted the fundamental problem with relying on complex matrices built on numbers and statistics to accurately indicate relative progress, namely that the items measured may not necessarily influence local opinion or support in the manner expected.[120]

REGROUPEMENT

Although the army experimented with resettling local populations in late 1954 in the Aurès region, *regroupement* did not become official policy until Lacoste made it so in 1956, and applied it to three other regions – Dahra, the Kabylie, and Bône. Villagers fled from both the rebels and the French army in numbers resulting in tremendous swells in the large cities and more established towns. Sometimes resettlement was undertaken in order to move these poverty-stricken shantytowns, or *bidonvilles*, to better locations and the people into more permanent buildings. Other times, the army forcibly removed people from the most rebel-infested areas, known as "forbidden zones," in order to simplify the process of destroying the rebel bands.[121]

As a policy, *regroupement*, as we will later see, required a substantial investment of military time and energy. Although it did yield great tactical benefits toward the successful destruction of enemy forces, French public scrutiny of the conditions in the

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[120] 2nd Bureau, 10th Military Region, *Point de la pacification: 15 November 1956*, November 15, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT.

[121] Growth in the areas around Algiers, Constantine and Oran from 1954 to 1960 were 67.5%, 63% and 48%, respectively. Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 212-221.

camps led to significant political cost for the government, forced to admit that over 500,000 had been resettled in 1958, and nearly a million a year later.[122]

HARKI UNITS AND AUTO-DÉFENSE

When Lacoste became the governor general, he supported enlarging the creation of two types of local units that Soustelle had formally initiated in September 1955.[123] Auto-defense forces raised locally would protect their own towns. *Harki* forces, meanwhile, were a more organized local Algerian militia that would in some cases integrate with French army forces and in other cases serve a primarily defensive mission, though not necessarily in their home villages.[124] *Harki* were often detached out to augment French army units in limited numbers. Using local forces to help protect their towns or to serve in some kind of colonial militia was of course not a new phenomenon but one that had been in place since the earliest days of the French empire, when the earliest Arab horsemen, known as *goum*, could be mobilized for short duration missions.[125] Bondis also referred to the importance of auto-defense forces in his field manual for Indochina. [126] This aspect of waging war in the colonial realm was not new,

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[122] Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 214.

[123] Jacques Soustelle, *Note pour Monsieur le Chef du Service de l'action administrative et economique*, September 13, 1955, 1H 2538, SHAT.

[124] Harki refers to one, and Harka to a unit, of such soldiers. Derived from Arabic root for "to move," حرك, ha-ra-ka.

[125] Thomas Rid, "The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (2010): 732; Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey," 392-393. The term *goum*, derived from the Arabic word for "people," قوم, was still in use in the 1950s, and typically referred to hastily-assembled local militia. Lyautey used men called *goumier* partisans in Morocco to little effect.

[126] Bondis, *Instructions*, 15.

but did apparently require coaxing at times for leaders to make the effort to train and lead these kinds of auxiliary forces.

Despite efforts to develop effective local security, by the end of 1956 the auto-defense forces in many areas were still not self-sufficient and relied upon the guarantee of army reinforcement. General Salan planned to reshuffle his army forces, and Lacoste asked him to reconsider, citing a great deal of worry from some specific local civilian officials in areas that would lose the army protection they had received. Due to a lack of sufficient force to protect the entire country at this point, Lacoste suggested expanding the auto-defense program. He hoped to create more units and to try to maintain the minimum numbers of troops in those areas with new units, to keep those programs functional.[127]

The establishment of the harki and auto-defense programs then, although intended to free army forces from having to protect the entire countryside, also required a fair amount of time and energy to support. Army units had to train the harki and auto-defense troops, had to teach them to shoot, to follow and relay orders, to use radios and report suspicious activity. Regardless of whether a commander favored using these local forces, he was generally expected to, and this effort would not only consume a certain portion of his manpower but curtail some of his operational options, as he had to include planning requirements for provisioning, arming, treating, and otherwise tending to these forces.[128]

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[127] Robert Lacoste, *Autodéfense* (Alger: Le Ministre Résidant en Algerie, December 14, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

[128] For most of the war, however, harkis received fairly paltry combat equipment and supplies, relying primarily on shotguns and hunting rifles that they either previously owned or were given by French units as seizures from rebels. Yoav Gortzak, "Using Indigenous Forces in

Opinions about the Harki and their effectiveness were mixed though the historical consensus appears to support that they improved over time and contributed significantly by the war's end. One veteran remarked that the Harkis were "imposed on army units from above with little guidance to how they should be recruited, trained, and deployed."[129] Another officer remarked to retired officer and noted wartime intellectual Jules Roy, "I don't trust one of them. The best of them is perfectly capable of killing me." During Roy's 1960 visit to Algeria, he observed the complex pressures acting on the local inhabitants: "some [families] have one man in the rebel forces and another in the army, either as a *harki* (in a fighting unit), or a *moghazni* (in the militarized administration), or a militiaman in a civil defense unit. Why on our side? Because they are paid, and can eat . . . The mayor's father was assassinated by the FLN. His brother, a captain in the French army, deserted. His uncle is Ferhat Abbas, the leader of the FLN."[130] Despite opinions of this kind, and the likelihood that many Harkis and other auxiliary forces were primarily motivated by pay rather than ideals, it appears in retrospect that the Harkis assisted significantly as their swelling numbers (nearly 180,000 by 1960) combined with gradually improved performance, enabled them to maintain security in pacified areas so that French forces could be used to seek out rebel forces in more contentious areas.[131]

Counterinsurgency Operations: The French in Algeria, 1954-1962," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 327-328.

[129] Gortzak, "Using Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations," 330.

[130] Roy, *The war in Algeria*, 48.

[131] Gortzak, "Using Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations," 316-317, 326-327.

Although creating *harki* and auto-defense units should have held the promise for French soldiers that local people could replace them and help expedite an end to the war, many did not see it that way. Likewise, local people viewed fighting for the French as both a possible income source and a quick path to having one's throat slit by rebels. Though the goal of having the locals learn to defend themselves and to hunt insurgents themselves seems to only carry rewards to the French in retrospect, training harki did not fit into every soldier's idea of his primary purpose in Algeria. For those soldiers who believed capturing and killing rebels should be the main pursuit, the requirement to help create Harki and auto-defense units must have seemed a distraction. No doubt this stemmed partly from a lack of effective communication about what the army's mission was, such that helping the locals defend themselves would not seem like a side-mission. A military school established during this period served the purpose of helping incoming leaders understand the pacification mission and its demands.

THE CENTER FOR TRAINING AND PREPARATION IN COUNTER-GUERRILLA WARFARE

> Born in North Africa, having lived there for 25 consecutive years I believe this course is essential for the metropolitans. For my part I saw again Muslim sociology that I had lost from view and am confident in the method of action on the population as defined by CIPCG – European Algerian at CIPCG, November 1958[132]

General Lorillot established the Center for Training and Preparation for Counter-Guerrilla Warfare (CIPCG) in June 1956 at Arzew, on the coast near Oran, and tasked it to teach soldiers about "Muslim psychology and sociology . . . the political bases of the Algerian rebellion . . . give the cadres the essential fundamentals they will require to carry out pacification activities with success . . . [and] provide instruction in counter-guerrilla methods." During its operation, the center went through several changes. By 1960 the school leadership developed the teaching of psychological warfare to the extent that it arguably became the primary source for indoctrinating incoming officers and NCOs in counter-guerrilla war.[133]

From an early period, the school served the purpose of trying to indoctrinate students in basic attitudes concerning the war, such as the existence of a "Muslim sociology" as distinct from that of the Frenchman. In July 1956, Lieutenant Colonel Fontès, CIPCG Commandant, explained the content of three pseudo-scientific courses to General Lorillot: Psychological Action, Muslim Sociology, and Counter-guerilla

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[132] C.I.P.C.G., *Stage B.16 Rapport des bulletins de sondage* (Arzew: Centre d'Instruction Pacification et Contre-Guerilla, November 29, 1958), 1H 2529, SHAT. I have hundreds of these student out-briefs, and this kind of comment is not unique, though there are certainly other students who had negative feedback. By and large though the feedback was positive, though I am unsure whether this reflects the school's quality, or simply French manners.

[133] Alexander and Keiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62*, 38-42.

Psychology. Fontes recognized the value of multimedia presentations to "stimulate discussion" and intended to show several government-produced films to help students grasp the complexities of working in the Muslim-Algerian-French world. Muslim Psychology covered the history of the "Arab Empire" and Saracen civilization, the basics of "classical Muslim sociology," which apparently centered around how the religious life influenced daily living (Korans, Imams, Mosque, etc), and how the Muslim population in Algeria lived from an anthropological perspective (rites and customs, clothing). The class also covered the French administration of Algeria, "politics and the Muslim population," the "Algerian demographic problem" (namely the burgeoning youth population), and the "economic interdependence between Algeria and the Metropole." By teaching students a frame of accepted French perspectives toward Muslim-Algerian culture, religion, and the place of France in Algerian life, economy, and society, the course attempted to normalize all the students toward a meta-narrative that would ideally influence their reasoning in the field later. Prescriptively, the class preached a mantra of inclusivity towards the Muslims, urging the students to "avoid everything that separates you, such as indifference, antipathy, haughty condescension . . . ostentation, wounded vanity; favor everything that brings closeness: direct contact, daily and continuous, tolerance, sincere and humane relations." Fontès further pled, "it is neither sufficient to equip the country, nor to adopt social legislation, nor to improve the life of the inhabitants; it is especially necessary that the different ethnic elements display mutual understanding." The lesson plans finally covered Pan-Arabism, the Arab League, and "the Algerian Question before the UN" (the degree of involvement that the UN would take in what France considered domestic affairs). Stated goals of the training included making the trainees into positive educators

and giving them the tools to build climates of trust with the Muslims, but also to "help the government in psychological action such as the work to dissociate the people from the rebels, to ally them immediately, and to prepare the future French-Algerian community." Some basic language training also accompanied the rest of the cultural training.
The 8-part Counter-Guerilla Psychology class featured lessons based on articles written not only by Fontès, but an article by Colonel Lacheroy on "the different phases of insurrectional war."[134]

Lieutenant Colonel Fontès conducted a survey in early 1957 to assess the value of his program's first six months and discovered that "the directives of the Minister-Resident [Lacoste] (. . .) are familiar to only 12 per cent of those in the courses, [and] the governmental Declaration of Intent issued by Prime Minister Guy Mollet, broadcast on 9 January 1957, is known to only 7 per cent of them . . ." While this survey only represented a snapshot in time, it reflected the difficulty of conveying the expectations for attitude (in this case, toward the local population) simply through written orders. Salan took this lack of effective communication personally, and admonished both his corps commanders and his Operations staff, which in turn ousted Fontès in July. Lieutenant Colonel André Bruge, a five-year veteran of a Viet Minh prisoner of war camp, left his post as deputy to the head of the Psychological Bureau in Algiers to become the new

[134] Fontes, *Action Psychologique et Sociologie Musulmane* (Arzew: Centre d'Instruction Pacification et Contre-Guerilla, July 9, 1956), 1H 2523, SHAT. Technological compatibility caused problems then as it does now; the films were 35mm but Fontes' projectors ran 16mm film.

school director. He would reorient the facility to its more well-known focus on psychological operations and counter-guerrilla war over tactics.[135]

One officer trainee leaving the school in 1959 remarked as follows: "I take out of this new course how pacification is the dominant aspect, how it is assuredly the root of problem and it has only convinced me, if I needed to be convinced, of the absolute need to establish contact with the population." Many other such out-briefs recorded similar sentiments.[136] It seems that if Soustelle and Lacoste's directives, reinforced later by those of Lorillot and Salan, could not reach the army in mass, a several-week program could potentially convey the message more effectively.

THE ARMY'S MISSION FOR 1957

In early November 1956, following the failed attempt by Britain and France to wrest the Suez Canal back from Egyptian control, French Army Chief of Staff General G.A. Piatte, issued training guidance for 1957 explaining what emphasis to place on various types of training. The rhetoric used in his memo would demonstrate the recognition of different inputs (doctrine, schools, propaganda) to informing the army's understanding of its mission. He explained that in the last two years, large numbers of

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[135] Alexander and Keiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62*, 39. No primary or secondary sources I have read list his first name.

[136] Frédéric Guelton, "The French Army 'Centre for Training and Preparation in Counter-Guerrilla Warfare' (CIPCG) at Arzew," in *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy*, ed. Martin S Alexander and John F. V Keiger (Portland, Or. Frank Cass, 2002), 51. The student outbrief remark Guelton cites comes from the same carton I examined. I have copies of many of these outbriefs and cite one at the beginning of this section. I cite his here only to lend credence to my view that many of the reports were positive and that I am not alone in suggesting as much.

army units had been employed in Algeria, primarily for maintaining order, but not specifically for "ground war and revolutionary war." Units "adapted to pacification and counter-guerrilla operations" had created the most operational "profit" in 1956. As a result, training for "ground war" by which all "young officers must receive the essential formation to lead an infantry section" would take precedence implicitly over improving policing skills or other non-combat related tasks. He also directed subordinates to training circular TTA 152, "Helicopter Employment," so they could better use this new technology for transport to battle. Other than expectations for units to improve performance at basic soldier skills, he closed with his thoughts on the importance of ideology and psychological war. Given the vast number of conscripts, he viewed it as vital that they understand the importance of the war they were fighting and were not susceptible to enemy propaganda. Yet, "if we don't want to 'indoctrinate' them, as it would fight against our sense of spiritual liberty, it's necessary that we use largely the means that are offered: explanations of plans, military press articles and slogans, photo-boards, and movies explaining the action of the army in Algeria (protection of life and property, pacification actions, social work)." He then specifically mentioned the Center for Instruction on Psychological War as a school that commanders could send officers to assist in this effort. Piatte's memorandum reinforced the role strategic level commanders could play in shaping perceptions of "mission" at the ground level. Piatte, for example, declared the army's mission in Algeria would remain unchanged in 1957: "to restore the order in Algeria and create a favorable climate for the resolution of the Algerian problem," yet his focus on ground war, pacification, and counter-guerrilla operations implied that policing alone would not accomplish this. Additionally, he expected his

subordinates to read and use doctrine, such as the training circular on helicopters, and he equally expected them to send officers to schools and use alternate media (posters, movies, press articles) to help convey the army's mission.[137]

SALAN REPLACES LORILLOT

General Raoul Salan, a *pieds-noir* and later leader of the rebellious Secret Army Organization (OAS), became commanding general of the 10th Military Region in December 1956, when he replaced Lorillot, who had served in the position for about a year and a half.[138] In his first major order to his subordinate commanders, he wrote to his subordinate generals to explain that he supported the Minister Residant's request to have the military cooperate with the civil authorities and explained that the exact requirements would have to be made at local levels and in consultation with the special civilian authorities known as IGAMEs (Inspectors General for Administration on Special Mission).[139] Lacoste had written Salan at the end of November to request that the army continue supporting civil efforts despite its primary mission of restoring order, apparently recognizing the possibility that diverting army assets toward civil efforts might threaten the army's ability to contain the insurgency. Lacoste's letter to his IGAMEs and prefects

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[137] Piatte, *Conduite de l'instruction en 1957* (Paris: Secretariat d'Etat aux Forces Armées "Terres," November 8, 1956), 1H 2408, SHAT.

[138] It appears Lorillot left Algeria because he had been in command a sufficient length of time, rather than for any perceived poor performance. He was appointed Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces for a period of weeks in May 1958, shortly after the mass riots in Algiers on the 13th that brought De Gaulle back to the political stage.

[139] Raoul Salan, *Coopération de l'Armée à l'œuvre civils de pacification* (2nd Bureau, Chef-Etat Major, 10th Military Region, December 8, 1956), 1H 2538, SHAT.

credited the army with restoring order in many places and with helping the populace, to the extent, it seemed, that he gave the army –and not the civil administrators– credit for controlling the political situation. Lacoste explained that (perhaps to rebalance the relationship) the SAS would now come under direction of the IGAMEs. He requested that prefects and IGAMEs do their best to ensure smooth transition and continuity in the event that officers and units had to be reassigned to accomplish this reorganization. Lacoste also requested that his IGAMEs and Prefects report back on how they were using their SAS officers and how they were distributing the funding they had been given.

CENTER FOR TRAINING IN SUBVERSIVE WAR

By the spring of 1958, Minister of Defense Jacque Chaban-Delmas had recognized that a great deal of the action in subversive war "falls upon the leaders of small units, lieutenants and captains," and decided to create a center for the training of Subversive War (*Centre d'Entraînement à la Guerre Subversive* – CEGS) for them to "receive training based on the experiences of Indochina and Algeria." This injunction about the value of lessons from both wars may have contributed to his choice of Colonel Marcel Bigeard as the first director for the 4-6 week course. Bigeard, commander of the famed 3rd Colonial Parachute Regiment that had assisted in the Battle of Algiers, was a hero of Dien Bien Phu. The Defense Minister was himself no stranger to subversive war, having served in the French resistance and in 1947, at age 32, became France's youngest general since the Empire. He expected Bigeard to teach officers how to target and destroy the political-military infrastructure of rebel bands and to perform day and night patrols. Salan further clarified his expectations for Bigeard, explaining that the course should

consist of a classroom phase, a long middle phase involving travel to a variety of sectors and subsectors to observe subversive war first-hand, and return to the center for conclusion. Lorillot, now the Chief of Staff of the Army, determined that it would be located in Philippeville, the northeast Algerian port city infamous for the 1955 massacre of *pieds-noir*. He also stipulated that it should not replicate the training performed at CIPCG.[140]

While CIPCG was the main locus for indoctrinating soldiers and leaders about the common wisdom regarding revolutionary war, CEGS was focused on the hands-on business of targeting rebel command cells, and patrolling in all environments. Additionally, the off-site trips in the CEGS training program would have given the 86 lieutenants and captains arriving from French staff college in the initial class (May 1958) a wide view of the war across the country. Lorillot planned for them to receive some kind of initial orientation at CIPCG first before moving on CEGS. What is unclear from the documents is why Chaban-Delmas believed that an entirely new school was needed, and that CIPCG could not be adjusted to accommodate a new training requirement. While Lorillot directed that the Commander of CEGS should receive the newest intelligence developments routinely, it seems only plausible that CIPCG and CEGS would have still potentially taught not only different aspects of war, but different outlooks *about* the war.

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[140] Rollin, *Creation d'un Centre d'Entraînement à la Guerre Subversive*, March 26, 1958, 1H 2577, SHAT; Chaban-Delmas, *Creation d'un Centre d'Entraînement à la Guerre Subversive*, March 21, 1958, 1H 2577, SHAT; Henri Lorillot, "Création d'un Centre d'Entraînement à la Guerre subversive", April 11, 1958, 1H 2577, SHAT.

Regardless, by 1958, two major training sites now provided input about war in Algeria to new officers preparing to lead soldiers in combat.[141]

BROAD SUMMARY OF THE POLICIES FROM 1954-1958

At this point, the major policies of Soustelle, Lacoste, Lorillot, and Salan should be somewhat familiar. Even though Soustelle and Lorillot assumed their responsibilities very early in the war, some aspects such as the logistics network and basic political structure were already in place. There is truly no blank slate when it comes to warfare, since all policy decisions must eventually interact with the realities of the socio-political environment on the ground as well as the institutional realities of a state-based military. During this period Soustelle and Lorillot developed policies that fundamentally shaped the operational scope of field commanders, specifically the early fielding of SAS and harki units, and an early cooperation between military and civilian officials. Later, Lacoste and Salan inherited these programs and in most cases supported expanding and improving them, and in some cases creating new programs, like the CIPCG and CEGS. Significantly, Soustelle and Lorillot created programs for the army to implement that Lorillot and Salan then required their subordinates to routinely report on in progressively more elaborate methods (charts, matrices, statistics).

THE FORMATION OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

The preceding sections have traced the numerous voices that served to construct French strategy in the first four years of the war, among them higher headquarters,

[141] I have not found reference in any secondary literature to CEGS, though it is certain that more records and probably articles about it exist.

military writings and experiences at the start of the war, and programs external to units such as schools. This project has used these variables to explore two themes – the difficulty of communicating a "single" strategy, and the means by which strategic culture is constructed. Before moving on to examine a specific unit's experience with receiving these various inputs, I will address communication of strategy and strategic culture at this juncture.

To speak of the "strategy" of the Algerian War requires reference to a very narrow point in time or location, or the admittance that no such single strategy existed. As I have shown, ideas about strategy were transmitted by many sources, each of which relayed slightly different visions of what the war was about it, what success meant, and how success would be achieved. In so doing, the difficulty of effectively communicating "strategy" becomes very clear. Senior civilian and military leaders felt compelled to reiterate their orders, but their orders were competing within a matrix of other influences, such as schools, previous war experience, current war experiences, and the requirements of their own policies and programs already in place. Furthermore, sometimes orders that do not specifically task units to take actions, but instead deal with broad policy adjustments, may not be circulated at the lowest levels. The presence of both civilian and military officials in Algeria further complicated the problem of determining which source was most valid. Schools too can exert an influence on perceived strategy since they can strongly acculturate leaders to particular outlooks about the nature of or the way to wage war, through class discussion and hands-on training. The lessons learned in such an environment will often reach people in a far more visceral manner than even the best-phrased directive or doctrinal manual. Doctrine, as a source of influence, occupies a

special place because its status often as a mass-produced and bound text confers some legitimacy. Doctrinal publications can receive a metaphorical significance through soldier slang referring to it as "the Book" or even "the Bible." But doctrine, for all the authority imparted to it by the fact that it is published, can also become quickly out-dated or obsolete when situations on the ground do not align with those for which the doctrine was intended to be helpful. We could summarize the conversation on transmitting strategy by saying that (a) the strategic leadership faced many challenges in communicating a coherent, undiluted and unchallenged "strategy" to field commanders; and (b) the turn-over between commanding generals and governors general affected the consistency of strategy and the plausibility of pointing to "a" strategy.

One solution for more fully explaining "strategy" in the context of a war as long, varied, and complex as the Algerian War could be to explore the "strategic culture" extant during the time. "Strategic culture" as a field of study serves a tremendous purpose for the historian, strategist, or policy analyst interested in most fully understanding an army's attitudes toward war, true capabilities in war, and means by which the commanders directly leading troops expected to gain victory. Speaking of a strategic culture requires not only to explain the generals' desired strategy but, to once again borrow Isabel Hull's deft wording, the "habitual practices, default programs, hidden assumptions and unreflected cognitive frames" extant in a military organization at a particular place and time. This thesis has focused on 1954 to 1958 because by 1958 the French army's strategic culture had developed to an identifiable degree that is both distinct from the army's culture at the war's start, and from the culture that would develop over the last several years (a suitable topic for further research). The army by

1958 could both trace its origins in the Indochina war and to the first years in Algeria but had also developed distinct identifiable habits.

Over this period successive military and civilian leaders strengthened and reinforced the legacy programs and policies of their predecessors resulting in more firmly entrenched practices. Those practices included military units partnering with SAS officers, recruiting and training *harki*, leading public works programs, participating in civilian administrative roles, and then later, undertaking large scale relocation of the population. In addition to the logistical framework extant at the start of the war, these factors could all be considered as what I call "structural elements" because they do not directly relate to warfighting or combat but they are routines that require manpower, energy, planning, and after a certain amount of time become assumptions about the nature of the war that are taken for granted.

Figure 4 depicts my rendering of strategic culture as the nexus between strategy and experience. On the one hand, orders and policies interact directly with commanders and hence are located directly with strategic culture. Strategic plans are a little more removed from direct interaction with commanders; they are usually expressed through specific orders. Policies also interact indirectly by helping to creating some of the structural elements that likewise bridge experiences and undergird the strategic culture. Black horizontal lines represent the stratified military hierarchy that stands as a filter between the strategy conceived at the highest levels and its execution at lower levels. Some strategy-relaying orders will penetrate several layers, while others will only be felt at the ground level through transmission as a structural element or indirectly through a unit's particular organizational culture.

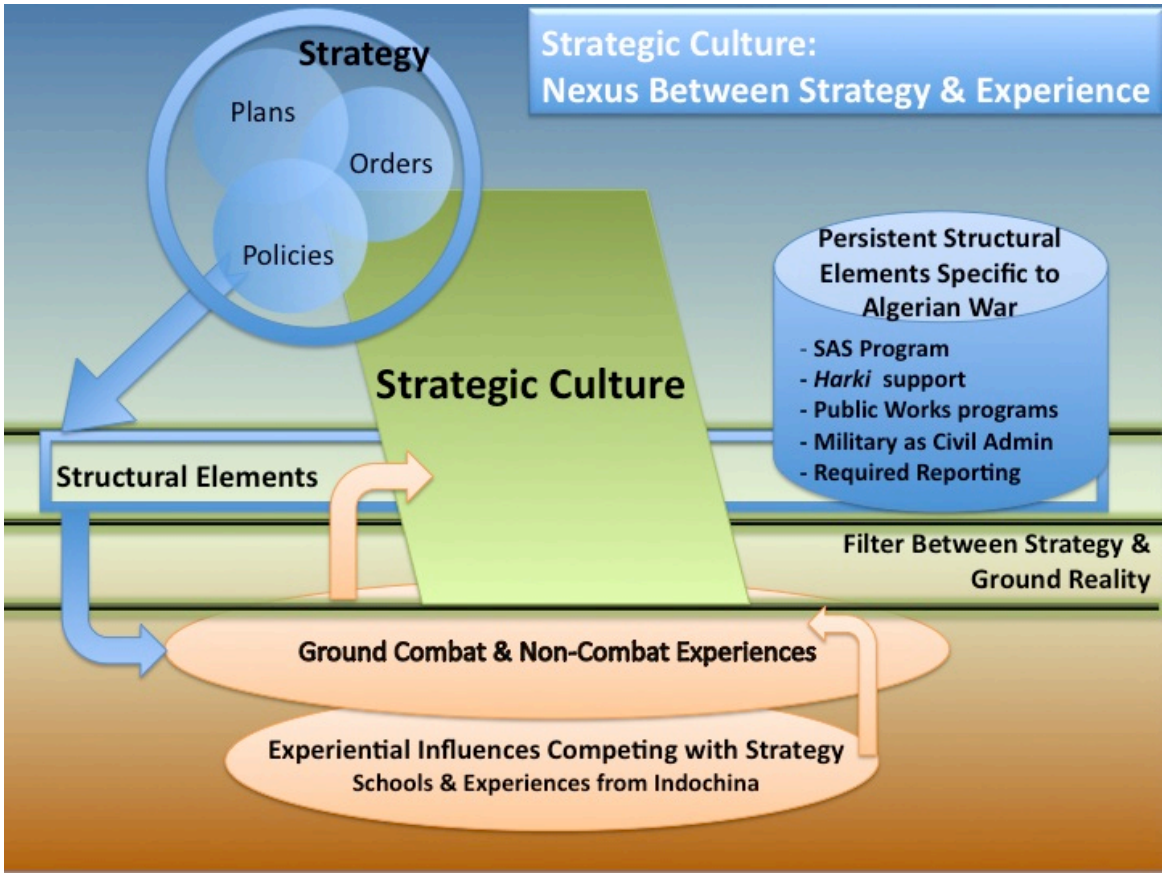

Figure 4: Model of Strategic Culture

This diagram admittedly frames strategic culture as a kind of "black box," fine for now while we are focused on understanding the numerous sources, but insufficient for explaining the results. These various inputs, working with and against one another, engaged in a process that could be likened to constructing a portrait of France's strategic culture, though a portrait drawn by many artists with contending images in their minds of the "right picture" and all sketching in the dark. To shine light on the portrait we must turn to the experiences of commanders and units on the ground as they attempted to reconcile these many inputs into coherent images of strategy for themselves. The result, strategic culture, is understood by and expressed through the habitual actions of units,

and the thoughts about war expressed by field commanders. These will be the lights we shine upon our portrait of strategic culture, to expose how it aligned with its artists' intentions and defined a specifically French "way of war."

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCES AT THE SECTOR LEVEL

One way to gauge the effect of these various policies is to take a few snapshots in time of a unit's experience implementing pacification policies, and assess how the commander and subordinate leaders expressed their understanding of pacification as a result of the various inputs explained in the previous sections. To do this, we will examine how a particular unit attempted to implement the policies and programs described, such as the requirements of civil programs, training local volunteers to serve as harki and auto-defense units, and regrouping populations. Evidence of the units' efforts and several commanders' reports and reflections will indicate how operational-level leaders viewed the nature of the war – and their role in it – by the end of 1958.

In this case the unit in question is the 117th Regiment of Infantry, centered on the town of Blida, commanded by a Colonel Desjours from October 1956 to February 1959.[142] Desjours wrote an essay for *Revue des Forces Terrestres* in October 1959, primarily focused on the benefits of regrouping populations, but from which we can also derive some contextual information to help assess the operational records from his unit available from the French army archives. A combination of unit records and orders belonging to his unit and emanating from the command levels above him, will help tell the story of how pacification strategy was received, interpreted, and transmitted at the unit level. His essay, a summary from his perspective of some of his prime

[142] If Blida sounds familiar, it is because Frantz Fanon practiced psychiatry there while become more heavily involved with the politics of the FLN, and for this reason the city hospital now bears his name. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 139.

accomplishments, conveniently portrays what he believed was most crucial to pacification with the benefit of hindsight.

Figure 5: Sub-Division of Blida

THE 117TH REGIMENT OF INFANTRY IN BLIDA – ARRIVAL IN 1956

Desjours explained that upon arrival, shortly before the Battle of Algiers began to take place some twenty miles to the east, "this territory was the theater of intense urban and rural terrorism. Attacks and various acts of destruction grew to a high number. Attacks by revolver and grenades caused losses among the people of both communities, such that the hunt for the terrorists, due to accomplices helping them, often proved

fruitless. Morale was painfully affected, and some Europeans in their desperation may have indiscriminately attacked Muslims, almost all of whom were innocent."[143] A report by Desjours's immediate commander, General Manceaux-Demiau, supports this assessment, if not as colorfully described. In fact Manceaux-Demiau had just dedicated an extra amount of effort in the Blida sub-division in early September to counter a strong rebel presence.[144] Finding such a seemingly dangerous situation, Desjours immediately ordered his subordinate commanders to establish posts to observe and control key roads and intersections, to protect sensitive sites, and to begin sending out nighttime ambush patrols against the insurgents. Rather than being ordered to regroup the people, he gives the impression that he and his commanders initially chanced upon population consolidation as an idea born of inspiration: "beyond the role of advanced sentinels and as bases of operations in the mountains, it appeared, once they were built, that the posts could serve equally well to protect the populations, if they were brought to cluster in the immediate vicinity."[145] Based on Manceaux-Demiau's report, we also know that Desjours's 117th Regiment, was "able in operations," a distinction that placed it in the top half of Manceaux-Demiau's forces, above those rated "mediocre" and "average" (the air force ground units and other assorted units) yet not as good as the "very good" regiments of paratroops, cavalry, Zouaves, and Sudanese riflemen in his zone.[146] Using the 117th as

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[143] Desjours, "La Pacification dans le Secteur de Blida: Octobre 1956 à Février 1959," *Revue des Forces Terrestres* 10 (October 1959): 31.

[144] Manceaux-Demiau, *Plans des Missions de pacification* (Alger: Commandant la Division Militaire d'Alger, September 18, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

[145] Desjours, "Pacification dans Blida," 32.

[146] Manceaux-Demiau, *Plans des Missions de pacification*.

a case study, therefore, hopefully represents a slightly above average but by no means exemplary unit. Its primary role was control of a swath of land and villages, which in a broad sense implied a static mission, but permitted plenty of activity within the assigned operational zone.[147]

A SAMPLE TRANSMISSION OF SEVERAL ORDERS

Desjours received, rewrote, and redispatched to his own commanders several orders that will provide suitable examples of how messages about strategy, conveyed through documents as seemingly straightforward as orders, are undeniably interpreted and repackaged along the way. The first of these would put in place a reporting framework that would likely dominate many military decisions from this point forward, while the second order experienced some specific modifications tailoring it to Desjours' sector.

Shortly before Desjours arrived in October, Lorillot issued guidance entitled "Participation of the Army in Tasks of Pacification," which was based on Lacoste's July memos "Thoughts on the Current Situation" and the previously mentioned "Directive No. 2" which together laid out his broad plan for the army's cooperation with civilians. Lorillot stated that the operational commanders should have control over all the

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[147] During the Algerian War, a company would typically control a sub-quarter (*sous-quartier*), a battalion would control a quarter (*quartier*), a regiment would control a sub-sector (*sous-secteur*), and a group of regiments typically under command of the senior regimental commander (sometimes referred to as a sub-division) would control a sector. A division would control a three-letter designated zone of operations, which in this case was the ZNA (North Algiers Zone). The structure of zones underwent a variety of changes during the war, but this represents one of the more durable frameworks. Also, despite the typical pairings described, units sometimes controlled areas of other sizes, either larger or smaller. In this case, Desjours was commander of the 117th Regiment, although several other units were attached to him to assist in his sector's pacification efforts. He is more often referred to in higher-level reports as Commander of the Blida Sector than as 117th Regiment Commander.

operations in their territories, to include those various operations such as "Health Services, Engineers, and Psychological Action." He explained that they would have to deliver monthly accounts of their success at pacification tasks, such as how many roads opened, how many public works were ongoing under army protection, how many medical aid missions, by-name lists of military personnel placed under control of civilian authorities to assist with administration, and any orders related to the SAS, creation of auto-defense units, or harkis that were issued. Beyond that, Lorillot wanted his commanders to create overlays for their zones of pacification that depicted villages and towns for which yellow and green color-coding would indicate relative levels of pacification progress. Finally, Lorillot wanted a statement regarding the activities and results of the loudspeaker companies (propaganda units).[148] When Desjours repackaged this order for his sector, he essentially copied Lorillot's order verbatim. Passing down to his subordinates Lorillot's expectations for monthly accounting, Desjours cemented the metrics to be used by the lowest echelons of the army through 1957, effectively closing the long chain that began with Commanding General of all the forces in Algeria, and ended up in the hands of the lieutenant colonels that men like Desjours commanded.[149] From this point on, French forces like Desjours' would be wed to the process of color-coding maps to display progress, tallying numbers of free medical visits, numbers of

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[148] Henri Lorillot, *Participation de l'Armée aux tâches de pacification*, September 22, 1956, 1H 2538, SHAT. Yellow, Stage 2 reflected "Control and Direction of the Population" while Green, Stage 3, reflected "Cooperation of the Population." Unpacified areas were left uncolored.

[149] Desjours, *Participation de l'Armée aux tâches de pacification* (Blida, October 6, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

roads improved, numbers of rebels killed and captured, outposts created, and political sites protected.

At the end of October, General Manceaux-Demiau wrote to his subdivision and zone commanders to clarify the expectations for pacification efforts he had set forth earlier. Not only did he highlight the importance of giving the civil authorities their fullest support but impressed upon his subordinates the importance of finding good representatives and spokesmen from the local population to work in civil government to assist the French improve relations and take advantage of what he identified as "evident signs of fatigue" by the rebel forces. Ideally, the newly-selected representatives would contribute to a gradual "substitution of the old political hierarchy." To assist Desjours and other officers in understanding how different Algerians fit into the relevant social hierarchies, an attached 10th Military Region Intelligence Section document described the various types of local officials and representatives one might encounter. The first group was "traditional elites," who either coalesced power as belligerent strongmen or through religious dignity (the *marabouts*). While many of them had occupied positions within French administration, many had "also paid with their lives for their attachment to France," and a large group remained aloof, waiting to see which side would gather the most momentum. Likewise, many of the members of the second group, the "elected," had resigned their positions in French government due to fear of rebel targeting, but the staff writer seemed certain that many of them would return to serve with some degree of loyalty once order was re-established in their areas. Among the various elected leaders were Municipal Councilors, *Djemaâ* Presidents, and Municipal Center Presidents. Finally, the memo mentioned "functionaries" such as the well-known Caîds, their

assistants, the Naîbs, and others such as Gamekeepers.[150] While the details of such a breakdown might seem both obvious and of little importance, the specific categorizations matter because they represent an attempt to construct a pseudo-anthropological and political framework by which junior officers across Algeria could evaluate the Kabyles and Arabs with whom they associated and determine their likely worth to the French enterprise. While such pieces of analysis were no doubt vital, and probably fairly accurate in the aggregate, they should also be recognized for the shaping effect they intended to have upon the classification of local peoples. Once men occupying known roles of marabouts and caîds were associated with military-sponsored status, they could gain or lose perceived value by virtue of their title independent of their actual transactional value in helping accomplish real improvements in security or local cooperation. In other words, a hypothetical French officer might not realize that an older gentleman sitting in the corner of local meetings possessed religious or tribally significant influence over the local population, but upon realizing that he was a marabout and what that title meant, he could appeal to the man for assistance in conveying French political messages. A local who proclaimed himself as a "leader" in order to curry favor with the French officer but could never quite seem to produce results might be identified as someone operating outside these categories and hence lacking a recognizable sphere of influence. His assistance could be dismissed in favor of seeking someone who could wield actual authority. This informational document carried authoritative status due to its

[150] The Djemâa was the local version of a town council, an apparently traditional form of local governance that both Lacoste and Soustelle supported. Manceaux-Demiau, *Directive (Pacification)*, Directive de Pacification (Alger: Commandant la Division Militaire d'Alger, October 20, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

origin at the highest levels of the French army intelligence structure and probably substantially shaped the way French officers viewed their political environment.

Later in October, Manceaux-Demiau ordered his sector commanders to adjust their units' task organizations in advance of a reshuffling within the division that would leave them all with fewer troops in their sectors. Manceaux-Demiau, who commanded the division surrounding Algiers, published guidance to prevent "adverse consequences" from this foreseeable decline in troops. First, he ordered them to consider allowing auto-defense forces in well-pacified areas to carry a larger burden of protection so that troops could be freed up to target less-pacified sectors. He additionally ordered commanders to draft some of their best troops into special shock troop units to serve each sector and sub-sector. Such a rearrangement would place the middling quality troops on static guard and allow commanders to reassign the more competent troops to units that would pursue the rebels in the field. Second, Manceaux-Demiau decreed that these now higher-status troops of "the hunt" would be protected from daytime duty so that they could rest in preparation for other missions.[151] When Desjours passed down this order to his battalions, requiring them to restructure their companies into average quality guard forces and higher quality mobile shock units, he mentioned it almost as an afterthought to a more prominent message concerning the transfer of some defensive responsibilities to the harkis and other native forces. Interestingly, Desjours actually altered Manceaux-Demiau's note when he sent it on as an attachment to his subordinates. Not only did he have a staff officer retype it as a one-page memo (possibly for ease of reproduction), but

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[151] Manceaux-Demiau, *Note*, Note (Alger: Commandant la Division Militaire d'Alger, October 23, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

he also deleted Manceaux-Demiau's notation that the middling forces would become the static elements while the high quality forces would take on the night-stalker role. It is not clear whether this was a conscious decision to avoid having any subordinate commanders feel slighted by their amended assignments but it does point to the reality that intermediate commanders will interpret and re-transmit the orders of their superiors as best fits their sense of the situation. Note also Desjours could only have made this amendment if he either believed he had that kind of latitude or that Mancieaux-Demiau would not follow-up and check on him. Ultimately, Desjours followed Mancieaux-Demiau's order to restructure his units but he apparently avoided stratifying his troops or creating a false sense of status among some. Nonetheless, he did point out the need for all internally selected commandos to be "men of physical vigor, attitude, aggressiveness before the enemy," qualifications not mentioned by Manceaux-Demiau. Finally, he implored his commanders to make use of the Territorial Units (generally *pieds-noir* reservists*,* sometimes also Arabs) although not to assign them exclusively to guard duty because "to ask [men to perform] only guard duties or watch leads to the decrease [in morale] in their own eyes and makes them lose all enthusiasm."[152]

This example of restructuring forces and the way the message passed to lower echelons demonstrates the construction of a strategic culture in action. By ordering a wholesale rearrangement of forces that would establish the equivalent of a modern rapid-reaction force for each battalion, Mancieaux-Demiau must have necessarily removed troops from sector duty. By modifying the Type 107 Battalion format (four rifle

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[152] Desjours, *Transmission de la note 3.164/DMA/3.OPE de la DMA du 23/10/1956*, Note de Service (Blida: Secteur de Blida, October 26, 1956), 1H 4377, SHAT.

companies, four rifle platoons) a battalion commander by necessity would have had fewer troops to perform sector duty, requiring either a rearrangement of protected sites and posts or a reduction in available forces at those locations.[153]

EXPERIENCES WITH HARKI AND AUTO-DÉFENSE FORCES

Of course, while French troops would not take well to being employed purely for defensive purposes, that was the entire purpose of the auto-défense units. Desjours' unit seems to have had a generally positive experience with them.

Lacoste wrote to General Salan in December 1956, asking him to reconsider the troop movements he was planning, particularly those units that were ordered to relocate from areas they were protecting whose populations had most vigorously applied for the units to stay and protect them. Due to a lack of sufficient force to protect the entire country at this point, Lacoste suggested expanding the auto-defense program to create units in as many areas as possible, and to try to maintain the minimum numbers of troops in those areas necessary to keep those programs functional.[154]

The next month, General Desjours wrote his subordinate commanders to explain how they should expand the numbers of self-defense units working with them. He examined the risk posed by giving them weapons, primarily being that the rebels could take the weapons from the villagers, but he decided nonetheless that he would accept the

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[153] Jackson explains that the Type 107 battalion described above differed from the NATO-model infantry battalions the French army maintained in Europe. The Type 107 was an evolution from the counterinsurgency-specific infantry battalion used in Indochina, better suited for dispersed operations and patrolling than the heavier NATO-model. Peter Jackson, "French Ground Force Organizational Development for Counterrevolutionary Warfare between 1945 and 1962" (Fort Leavenworth, Kan. US Army Command and General Staff College, 2005), 89-92.

[154] Lacoste, *Autodéfense*.

risk, provided that the arms were distributed in limited numbers and that a local unit should protect the auto-defense units when possible. He appointed his adjutant, Colonel Malleray, to oversee the project in conjunction with local SAS teams.[155]

Desjours mentioned auto-defense units as a vital part of his *regroupement* program, specifically that by the final stages of completion of the new village, auto-defense units were generally effective guards, typically standing guard in watchtowers, and cooperating with French military at nearby posts.[156]

Unfortunately, despite the attention paid to harki in this order, not very much information about harki successes or failures appears in the unit's reports concerning large-scale operations. In 1957 and 1958, Desjours conducted at least five large-scale search-and-destroy operations based on gathered intelligence pinpointing likely enemy command posts. They carried the code names ATLAS (April 1957), NC 15 (July 1957), MECHATA and FLAVIEN (August 1958), and AUMALE 49 (September 1958).[157] In the voluminous records of ATLAS and the latter three operations, only those for FLAVIEN mentions the presence of native units, specifically "Harkis from the Palestro Sector," although it makes no reference to their employment.[158] We will look at the

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[155] Desjours, *Groupes d'auto-défense*, S.P. 87.455 (Blida: Secteur de Blida, 1957), 1H 4377, SHAT.

[156] Desjours, "Pacification dans Blida," 36.

[157] 5 pages (27 cartons) cover the operational files for the Blida Sector, listing 6 named missions, one of which occurred in late 1959 after Desjours had changed out of command. There may have been other large-scale missions, but their files are not contained in these boxes. Jean Nicot, Philippe Schillinger, and Caroline Obert, eds., *Algérie: Inventaire de la Sous-Série 1 H (1H 1091-4881), 1945-1967*, vol. 2 (Château de Vincennes: Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, 2001), 670-675.

[158] J Romain-Desfosses, *Operation MECHATA* (Blida: 6˚ Regiment de Parachutistes Coloniaux, August 8, 1958), 1H 4369, SHAT; Colonel Ducasse, *Operation AUMALE 49* (Blida: 6˚ Regiment

largest of these, Operation ATLAS, to gain a sense of the scale of these missions, and how Desjours could undertake one without specifically using or mentioning harki.

Operation ATLAS, a three-phase mission, was designed to destroy "the command post for Wilaya IV – training camp, infirmaries, ammunition storage."[159] The number of troops needed and size of area under concern would seem to have necessitated using all available forces, to include harki. For this mission, Desjours employed his own 177th Regiment and elements of other units belonging to his sector, specifically the 4th and 21st Colonial Infantry Regiments. In addition to these, however, he was also given operational control over units from outside his sector. These included the entire 3rd Colonial Parachute Regiment (3rd RPC, one of the "General Reserve" units), and several companies each from the 6th Infantry Regiment, the 65th Colonial Regiment of Artillery, and the Colonial Regiment of Tank Destroyers.[160] Although no sum is given, the tally of approximately twelve to fifteen companies would have given him well over a thousand troops actively in the field. Since most sector operations at this time primarily involved local pacification efforts and local ambushes and patrolling, this operation was of a magnitude heretofore unseen in the Blida sector to that point. Desjours' plan involved using the majority of his forces as the cordon (*bouclage*) while the 3rd RPC would search

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de Parachutistes Coloniaux, September 1, 1958), 1H 4369, SHAT; J Romain-Desfosses, *Operation FLAVIEN* (Blida: 6˚ Regiment de Parachutistes Coloniaux, August 18, 1958), 1H 4369, SHAT.

[159] ATLAS was a 3-phase mission. The first phase, and original mission created the largest numerical gains for the French forces while the subsequent two operations tried to capture the remainig rebels but did not produce tremendous results. Colonel Desjours, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS I (29 Mars - 2 Avril 1957)* (Blida, April 12, 1957), 1H 4369, SHAT.

[160] French military abbreviations: RI: Infantry Regiment; RIC: Colonial Infantry Regiment; RPC: Colonial Parachute Regiment; RAC: Colonial Regiment of Artillery; RCCC (Colonial Regiment of Tank Destroyers – *Chasseurs de Char*).

the many ravines, hills, wadis, and gullies in an effort to either find and destroy the rebels in place or push them toward the cordon.[161] (See figure 6)

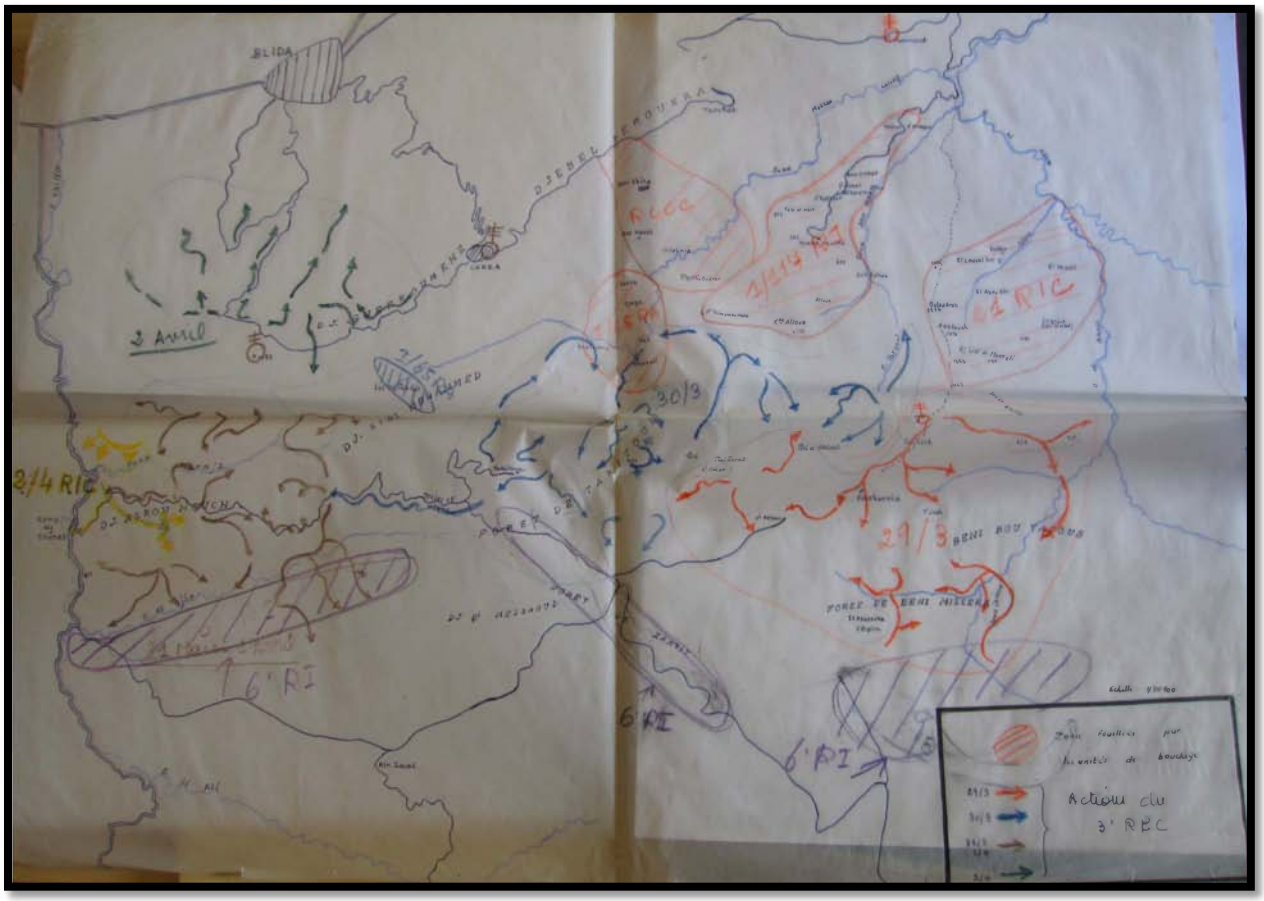

Figure 6[162]: OPERATION ATLAS I (29 March – 2 April 1957)

The operation covered an immense area, estimated at 260 km^2.[163] Despite this scale of troops at his disposal, there appears no apparent mention of harki in the hundred

[161] Desjours, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS I (29 Mars - 2 Avril 1957)*.

[162] The circled, hash-marked areas delineate the units in the cordon, and the colored arrows identify the planned axes of advance for the battalions of the 3rd RPC. Desjours, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS I (29 Mars - 2 Avril 1957)*.

[163] For comparision, Grenada is approximately 340 km^2. The US dispatched ~7,000 troops against ~1,200 Cuban troops. Grenada is also far less mountainous than this part of the Blida sector. 260

and twenty pages of various unit accounts.[164] It is possible that harki were employed in greater than normal numbers to augment the French troops left behind to maintain established defensive positions in the sector, but it does not appear that the harki were used in the operation itself, either as the cordon force, and certainly not as the assault force. It is possible that they went along with some of the units assigned to Desjours's sector, and who would have thus worked with them habitually, such as the 117th or 6th regiments. If this was the case, the harki contributions were either negligible or assumed to be of such a basic nature as to merit no mention.

This is not to say that the mission was such an absolute success that Desjours and his subordinate commanders may have simply glossed over harki contributions in their numerous reports. On the contrary, Desjours reported that while his troops killed 38 rebels, including two well-known rebel staff officers, and while they captured three rebels, at least 40 rebels escaped through the cordon during the night of 29 March, a number equal to perhaps a quarter of the enemy force. Had harki been part of that cordon, the unit reports might have targeted them as scapegoats for this failure, but harki are omitted entirely. Desjours insisted instead that large-scale operations, despite the most aggressive helicopter assaults led by the 3rd RPC, would never succeed in completely destroying the enemy in his sector. He believed the only viable option was to "occupy the terrain" they had scoured for days, the enormous Blidean Massif, the forbidding

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km^2 quoted in Colonel Bigeard, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS I (28 Mars - 2 Avril 1957)* (Blida, April 6, 1957), 1H 4369, SHAT.

[164] Colonel Desjours, *Subordinate unit reports for Operation ATLAS* (Blida, April 12, 1957), 1H 4369, SHAT.

mountainous area south and east of Blida city which to this day hosts no large settlements.[165] (See Figure 7)

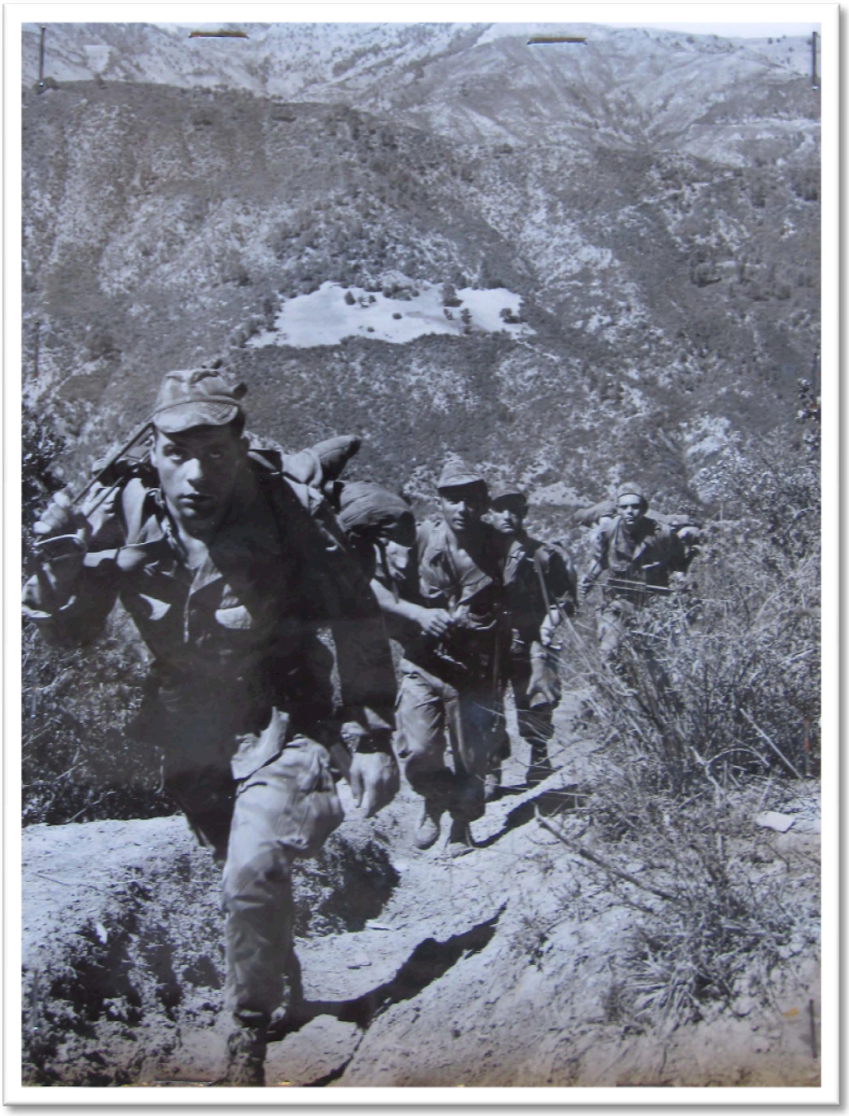

Figure 7[166]: French Paratroopers marching through the Blidean hills

[165] Desjours, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS I (29 Mars - 2 Avril 1957)*.

[166] These are paratroops of Colonel Bigeard's 3rd RPC, always noticeable for their beak-shaped forage caps. Colonel Bigeard, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS II (6 - 7 Avril 1957)* (Blida, April 9, 1957), 1H 4369, SHAT.

While the operational reports would seem to support French disdain for locally-raised troops in pursuing their own operational goals, Colonel Bigeard, 3rd RPC commander, dedicated a three-page appendix to his report on ATLAS II regarding the FLN's highly effective use of locally-raised partisans, known as *moussebilines*. Ironically, Bigeard cited the FLN's skillful use of partisans, noting that the "moussebel is a significant fighter who should be taken into account. He is a powerful help to the regular forces of the ALN." While the French in the Blida sector during the course of a over a year never raised sufficiently well-trained local forces to provide a substantial role at least in cordon operations, by early 1957 Bigeard had already recognized the significant role these same men could provide if working instead for the enemy. He remarked as a side note that the Viet Minh similarly employed partisans with the admonition that "the name changes, but the adversary remains the same."[167] While my analysis here does not seek to second-guess Desjours or the other commanders nor insist that they should have better employed harki, it does raise the question of why they could not make substantially effective use of local forces across the sector while the FLN cadre, many of them foreign fighters themselves (similar to the French in that regard), were able to capitalize on local forces.

It is possible of course that the time period under question, 1954-1958, ends too early to note the later effective use of harki forces. A March 1960 two-page spread in *L'Armée* magazine publicized the expansion of the auto-defense program in the western city of Oran from roughly 1,200 troops across 50 harki units in early 1958 to nearly 10,000 troops in 400 harki units by the end of 1959, estimated at roughly 7% of the local

[167] Bigeard, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS II (6 - 7 Avril 1957)*.

Muslim population.[168] (See French officer issuing weapons to a Harka in figure 8) Change does not sweep a country or a war uniformly, so the Blida sector certainly deserves further research in the years 1959 and 1960 to determine whether new leadership better implemented the auto-defense forces. Returning again to the concept of strategic culture, one must consider how much effort the French forces in Oran expended arming, training, and supervising 10,000 harki. A good metric could be to assume that each harki unit required at least one French sergeant or officer to provide occasional supervision, and that there were not anywhere near enough SAS to perform this function (approximately 700 SAS across Algeria by the end of 1959).[169]

[168] "L'Auto-défense en Oranie," *L'Armée* (March 1960): 88-89.

[169] Lieutenant Lion, "Témoignage d'un officier S.A.S.," *L'Armée* (July 1960): 24.

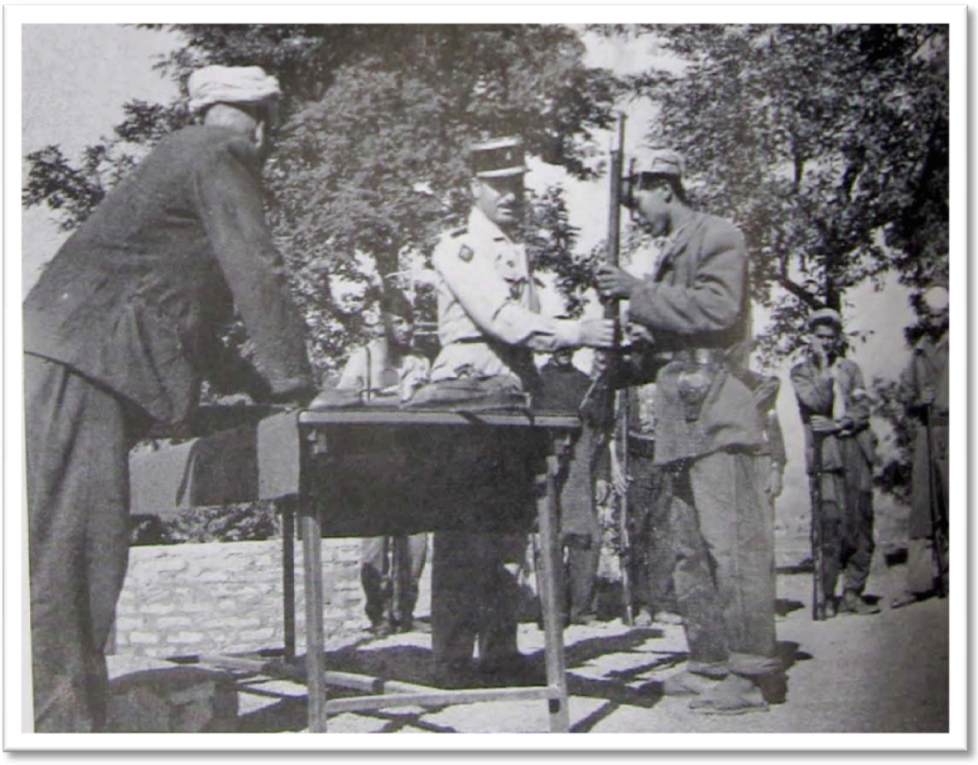

Figure 8[170]: French officer issuing hunting rifle to Harki member, c. 1960

Chef du Battailon Quelennec, commander of a battalion of the 23rd RIC, one of the units working in Desjours's sector, helps to fill the evidentiary gap at the battalion level. He submitted a "Project of Social, Administrative, and Military Organization" for Desjours's approval a month after Operation ATLAS which detailed his plans for interacting with the local population, building schools, providing medical care, and establishing auto-defense forces.[171] In a separate report written several months later, Quelennec gave tremendous credit to the quality of a 40-man Harka unit that successfully "repulsed a rebel attack" on its town, killing one of the rebels in the action. He admired

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[170] "L'Auto-défense en Oranie," 88.

[171] Quelennec, *Projet d'organisation sociale, administratve et militaire de la fraction "NAHIF"* (Ameur El Ain: 1/23° RIC, May 11, 1957), 1H 4377, SHAT.

their "agility, sense of how to use terrain, [and] knowledge of the mountains." These observed qualities permitted him to grant them autonomy to move about the battalion's sector as they wished in order to help hunt rebels.[172] Bigeard remarks of similar qualities exhibited by the moussebilines in his ATLAS II report: "guide, provider, watchman, liaison officer, who guards, provides intelligence and feeds the ALN passing through his village."[173] Quelennec sold the harkis advantages well. Desjours fully supported his subordinate's efforts to the extent that he requested additional tents and interpreters for Quelennec to accomplish what Desjours told his immediate commander might be a "pilot-program" for similar efforts. In addition to highlighting Quelennec's plans for creating a more robust harka unit, Desjours also mentioned his "close relationship" with the SAS, a topic that will receive more attention next.[174]

EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH SAS

Chef du Bataillon Quelennec mentioned his close working relationship with the SAS but sadly provided few other details to explain exactly how they helped one another. Desjours explained that his SAS officers and company commanders worked together to establish the best means for relocating the population, though he made little other mention to SAS in his article about the pacification of his sector.[175]

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[172] Quelennec, *La Pacification dans le Quartier d'Ameur El Ain* (Ameur El Ain: 1/23° RIC, August 1957), 1H 4377, SHAT.

[173] Bigeard, *Compte-Rendu l'Opération ATLAS II (6 - 7 Avril 1957)*.

[174] Desjours, *Projet d'organisation sociale, administrative, et militaire de la fraction MAHIF*, S.P. 87.455 (Blida: Secteur de Blida, May 21, 1957), 1H 4377, SHAT.

[175] Desjours, "Pacification dans Blida," 32.

The Warnier quarter, approximately 70 miles west of Blida, provides an interesting example of evidence from two sources seemingly at odds with one another over the importance of the SAS role. The final SAS Chief in the Warnier quarter, Captain Morin, wrote a 70 page report in 1961 that, taken together with several other extant examples of SAS reports, demonstrated the breadth of issues SAS officers undertook as well as the kind of relationship he had with the local military unit in his area. Morin provided tremendous historical, economic, social, agricultural, tribal and familial detail about the several thousand residents of his area yet did not describe in terrific detail exactly what he and his predecessors contributed to pacification itself. Evidently having filed a commendable report, Morin won himself a personal letter from the Inspector General of Algerian Affairs congratulating him on his fine work.[176]

Morin clearly saw himself and the SAS as integral to pacification efforts in Warnier by the end of the war, although he did not describe in great specificity how he and his predecessors actually contributed to them. In 1957, during our primary period of examination, Chef du Battailon Desgratoulet, author of a 12-page report entitled *Revolutionary War in Practice*, in which he described his efforts at pacifying Warnier using political and military means centered around robust intelligence gathering, mentioned the SAS chief's role in only the briefest manner.[177] General Salan himself singled this report out for distribution to Corps Commanders as a good example of

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[176] Capitaine Morin, *SAS de Warnier: Monographie* (Warnier: Service du Personnel des A.A., December 5, 1961), 1H 1219, SHAT.

[177] Chef du Battailon Desgratoulet, *Note de Service N°153/OR: Action militaire et politique à mener dans le quartier de Warnier*, Note de Service (Alger: ZOA II/2°RIC, May 30, 1957), 1H 2409, SHAT.

practices to follow (specifically developing intelligence networks and good governance principles) in their various sectors and zones.[178] Perhaps the SAS contributed less in 1957 because the chief's position was filled by a sergeant major rather than by a commissioned officer. Perhaps Desgratoulet overlooked the SAS's work in order to highlight that of his own intelligence section. Regardless, this evidence, combined with the relative silence of Quelennec and Desjours on the SAS's contributions to pacification point to an imbalance between the importance of the SAS as mentioned in orders emanating from higher and the commanders' own perceptions of the importance of the SAS.

[178] Raoul Salan, *Letter reference à Note de Service N˚153/OR du 30.5.57*, Letter (Alger: Commandement Superieur Interarmees pour la 10˚ RM, August 15, 1957), 1H 2409, SHAT.

REGROUPEMENT IN THE BLIDA SECTOR

Figure 9[179]: Regrouped Village in the Sand Hills

Although Desjours undertook work with SAS and several large-scale operations, he appears to have viewed relocating the populations as not only one of his unit's primary missions, but also the one that paid some of the most dividends. As mentioned earlier, his junior leaders recognized early on in the 117th's deployment to Blida that their outposts would not only provide a good location for sending out patrols against the enemy but to protect the local population, provided that the population is near enough to the outposts. After testing mass relocation in practice, Desjours pursued the relocation of numerous villages within his sector over the next two years.

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[179] Desjours, "Pacification dans Blida," 35.

Desjours's first relocations began in early 1957, and do not appear to have been directed from higher.[180] *Regroupement* in this case will serve as an example of the influence of actions that resulting from the will of lower leaders that seemed to be in line with their sense of how to conduct war. Desjours justified moving the population based on the belief that "the main issue in subversive war is determined by the local population," a view of population's centrality to success that was not new by this point. Colonel Lacheroy had stated at the close of Indochina that one important facet of revolutionary war involved the attempt by insurgents to control the population by structuring them into "parallel hierarchies" along gender, age, and position within the party structure. One of Lacheroy's most influential protégés, Major Jacques Hogard, published a two-piece article in the influence *Revue de Défense National* at the end of 1956 and early 1957 explaining parallel hierarchies and the centrality of population control for success of the revolution.[181] Early in 1957 two generals published an article on revolutionary war under a pseudonym which concluded that the power of the revolutionary forces "resides in two levers of extraordinary power: the conquest of the population and ideological conviction." The army distributed the essay later that year, having first appeared in the March 1957 *Revue Militaire d'Information*.[182] Generals

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[180] Although his work in the Kabylie in 1957 matches up with Heggoy's description of official policies appearing at that time. Heggoy, however, does not list specific documents and I do not possess any myself.

[181] Jacques Hogard, "Guerre révolutionnaire ou révolution dans l'art de guerre," *Revue Défense Nationale*, no. 12 (December 1956): 77-89; Jacques Hogard, "Guerre révolutionnaire et Pacification," *Revue Militaire d'Information* (1957): 7-24; Marie-Catherine Villatoux, "Hogard et Nemo: Deux théoriciens de la « guerre révolutionnaire »," *Revue Historique des Armées*, no. 232 (March 2003): 20-28.

[182] Ximenes, "Essai sur la Guerre Révolutionnaire," *Revue Militaire d'Information*, no. 281 (March 1957): 18.

Prestat and Saint-Macary suggested that several "classic parries" to revolutionary war existed, among which were repression by military and police, pacification that includes social and legal reforms; "defense of the surface" by holding key areas and using self-defense forces to fill gaps until other forces can deliver "decisive" blows to the enemy; and finally a "war of destruction". Prestat and Macary suggest that the classical principles of war do not apply closely to revolutionary war because the goal is different, and therefore calls for different approaches. In light of articles such as these advocating the novel nature of the war in Algeria, it should not be surprising that some commanders would try to exercise initiative outside the standard repertoire of tactical solutions when possible.

The influence of articles such as those just described, combined with the high command's insistence on the value of public works projects, SAS and *harki* units, gives good cause to believe that a commander such as Desjours could make a conclusion such as "the main issue in subversive war is determined by the local population." His statement produces two important take-aways. First is the very existence of such a relative (perhaps contentious) statement by an operational commander. It is a much different matter for a Lacheroy, Hogard, or generals Prestat and Macary to make declarative statements about the nature of war vice a former field commander making such a statement. While I have spent much of this paper explaining the many inputs to strategic culture during the war, his utterance helps the historian actually detect the impact of those statements on the consciousness of men charged with formulating on-the-ground solutions to the operational problems presented to them. In combination with the evidence of units undertaking certain kinds of actions, rare statements such as these from

men who served on the ground provide some powerful indications as to how the inputs shaped the resulting strategic culture.

Along those lines, some of Desjours' other statements also indicate how the pursuit of goals that appeared in line with his view of strategic expectations (in this case forcibly resettling the population) resulted in actions out of line with the dictates of morality. While the use of torture in Algeria would be one thread to trace in the context of this discussion, Desjours' explanation of relocating populations provides some other useful indications. For example, Desjours justifies his actions by explaining the means he took to ensure the families' continued subsistence, such as facilitating their travel to pasture their flocks or tend nearby fields. He also cited rebel documents captured in early 1958 in which a rebel leader states to his commander "apart from some patriots, all the civilians refuse to work with us and if we continue in our inactivity, the sector is lost, because it will become untenable." He finally cited the lamentable "13th century conditions" in which the people lived before being given the opportunity to live in French-made communities providing clean water, electricity, and schools.[183] It is important to recognize in the context of his article that Desjours justifies his resettlement with strategic purposes, whether defeating the rebels, providing a better life to the local people, or taking measures to win them over to the French side. Commanders want the means they adopt to be justified by the ends they seek, and the competing narratives of strategy can serve to reinforce a number of different options available to the commander.

[183] Desjours, "Pacification dans Blida," 34-40.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has traced the evolution of French strategy not from one source but from several, and has tied that expressed strategy in with the actual efforts undertaken on the ground by field commanders to explain two phenomena: first, the difficulty of conveying a single coherent strategy amidst the complexity and scope of a war such as that fought in Algeria in the 1950s; and second, the utility of constructing a picture of an army's strategic culture in such a conflict in order to better understand the perceptions about strategy extant in the minds of the commanders charged with actually executing it.

Exploring strategic culture helps the historian understand the assumptions about war that undergirded the decisions made on the ground by field commanders. While it would seem that commanders should simply adopt the views expressed by higher commander in the orders disseminated through official channels, the evidence provided points to the difficulty in any single message reaching all the commanders (problems with transmission), and demonstrates how their choice of actions convey the different ways commander perspectives could vary from the officially espoused methods.

A project examining French strategy that stopped at the "strategic" level and did not examined operational experiences could justly conclude that cooperation with SAS and Harki units were integral considerations to army operations, or that Lacoste's three-step program guided army operations down to the lowest levels, for example. The opportunity to examine how a regiment dealt with its sector, armed with the knowledge o the programs and orders instituted by strategic leaders, permits us to see that nothing is quite that simple. Rather, Desjours and his subordinate leaders make little mention of SAS or Harki in their operational files, and Desjours does not seem to nest his operations under the rubric of Lacoste's framework. Without reference to the thoughts, experiences,

and actions of commanders leading troops on the ground, strategic-level surveys can only serve to at best describe the "ideal" of leadership's expectations for strategy.

Strategic culture can be expressed in several ways. One can test hypotheses about how the army *should* act and the attitudes leaders *should* espouse based on the presence of strategic-level documents and statements. One could also attempt to express strategic culture by explaining the habits and routines the army most frequently displayed as evidence of a particular orientation in effort. One example could be the decision whether to move out into the countryside or to re-group the population closer to French forces. Both could accomplish the goal of denying the rebel forces area to maneuver and support from the population, but the decision ultimately rests on certain assumptions about the war that result from differing mixes and interpretations of the various inputs we have examined here.

Figure 9 represents some hypothetical considerations a commander might have for either moving into the countryside to engage the local population there or to regroup them into cantonments nearer areas that he could easily support. This decision marks two different "ways-of-war" or two different expressions of strategic culture. The supporting points for both positions are valid in their own way, reflecting both assumptions about the nature of revolutionary warfare in general and specific complications on the ground. Here the decision is portrayed as "resting" on a fulcrum balancing the two choices.

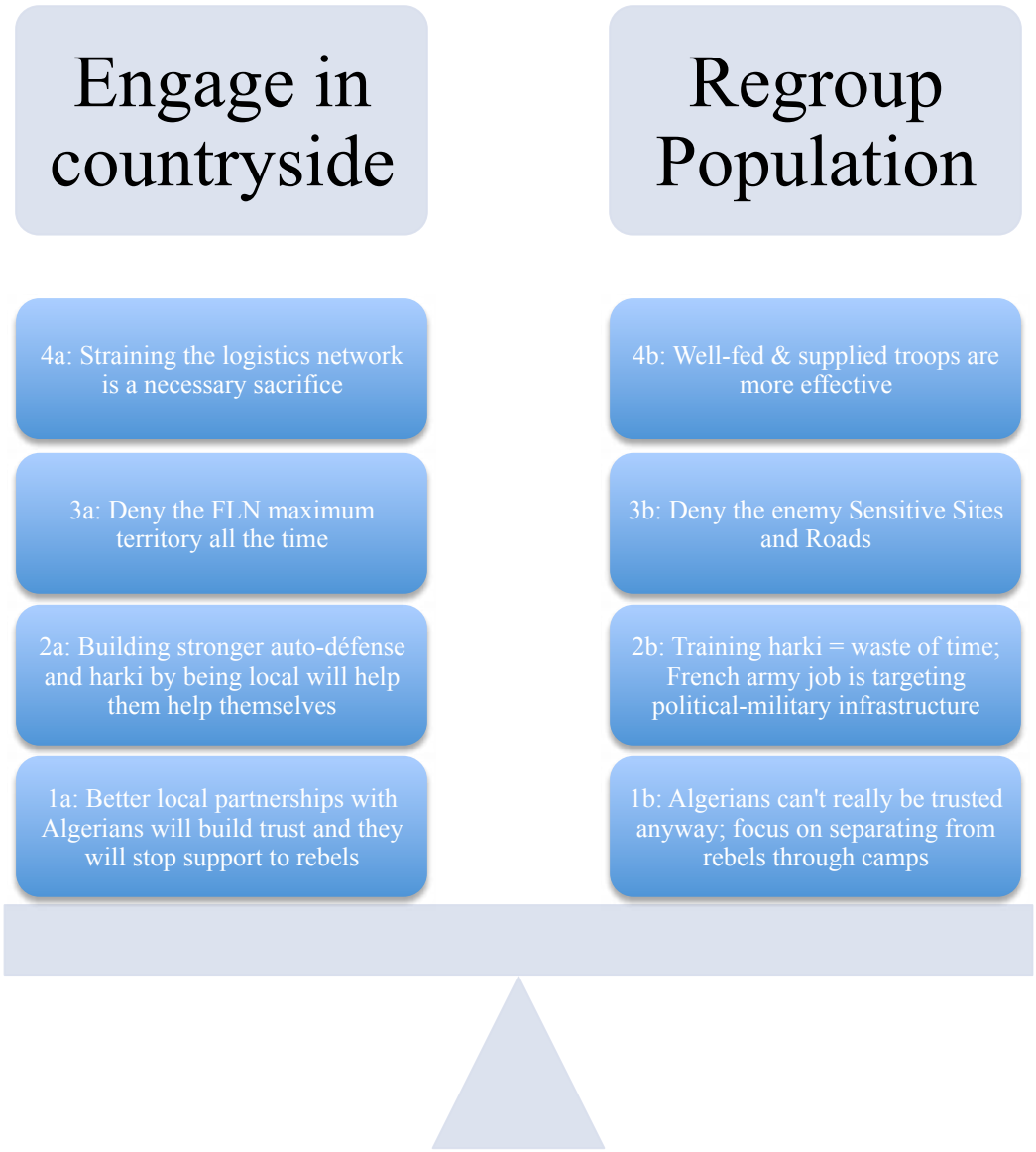

Figure 10: Two courses of action viewed through the lens of strategic culture

Each of the blocks represents a different source's view on matters. Starting with the bottom blocks, block 1a represents the official policies Soustelle and Lacoste supported, and summarizes the advantages of a robust SAS. Contrast this with Block 1b, which might summarize a typical soldier's view but actually reflects Desjours' and Roy's

own words concerning the difficulty of truly separating the people from the rebels when they are often members of their own families. Moving on, Block 2a reflects strategic leadership's emphasis on harki and auto-defense, and the positive experiences of Quelennec and Bigeard (or his attitude toward the effectiveness of partisans), while block 2b's emphasis on targeting political-military structure (it takes soldiers to train harki and soldiers to hunt rebels, and these are sometimes incompatible) reflects the writings of not only Lacheroy and Hogard but the focus of efforts by both Quelennec and Desgratoulet. Regarding the army's orientation towards capturing and killing rebels in sector, Block 3a represents an ideal, while Block 3b represents the influence that metrics requiring reporting of sensitive site and road protection could have upon that ideal. This is to say that ideally, the army would deny *all* maneuver area to the rebels, but in an environment constrained by limited troops and the need to report the successful protection of specific sites, those areas will be protected while areas that are not considered "sensitive" cannot receive the same attention. Finally with regard to logistics, Block 4a represents Quelennec and Galula's attempts to move into the countryside, an effort that would necessarily strain logistics and reduce soldier standards of living. Meanwhile Block 4b represents an approach fixated on the connection between troop effectiveness and how well fed and well housed they are. Through this simple example, one can see how the different sources of "strategy" and strategic outlook can influence different solutions to the same problem.

Rather than only complicating the history of the Algerian War and the study of strategy, efforts to perceive strategic culture can permit historians and strategists to ask and answer important questions about the nature and conduct of war. In particular, we

can start by identifying the various sources of strategy extant in an army's experience in war, and then analyze how successfully various messages penetrated to the field commander level. The answer leads to important conclusions about the various weight of written manuals and orders, the pressure of reporting metrics, how well-read field commanders were in the military literature of their time, and how strongly influenced they were to write about their own experiences in policy memos intended for their superiors to read.

Gauging the French army of the Algerian War from this perspective yields some interesting insights. Field commanders took initiative to shape the battlefield according to the assumptions they brought with them to the fight about the nature of the war, whether from reading Mao Tse-Tung, the essays of their peers, or drawing on their experiences. Commanders demanded a voice in strategy, clearly seen through the evidence of numerous reports they wrote to their higher headquarters explaining what they did well and how their ideas could be applied broadly. French officers seemed to believe they were engaged in an important struggle whose repercussions would be felt not only in Algeria, but also potentially throughout North Africa and Europe. An officer corps of this kind appears thoughtful and intellectual in hindsight, and even if that is a myopic view based on the evidence of a mere handful of men possessing those qualities, one should not be surprised that these men would adopt strategic outlooks reflecting their best synthesis of all the perspectives available to them.

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